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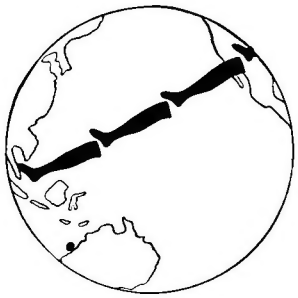

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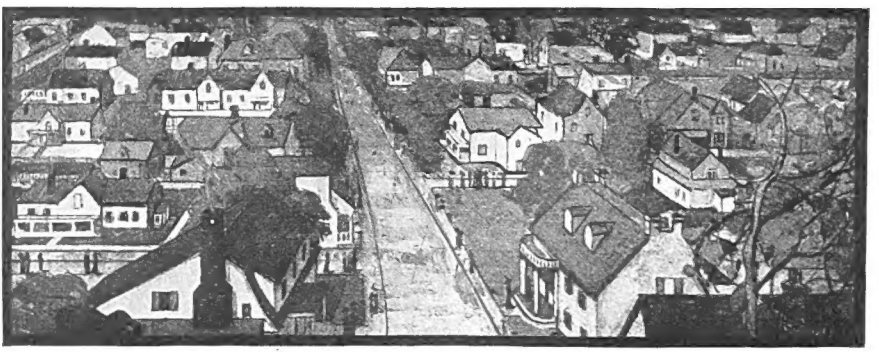

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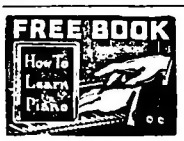

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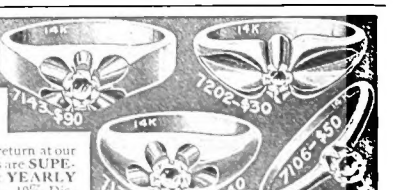

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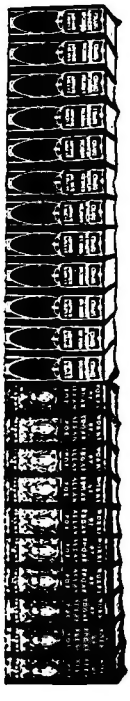

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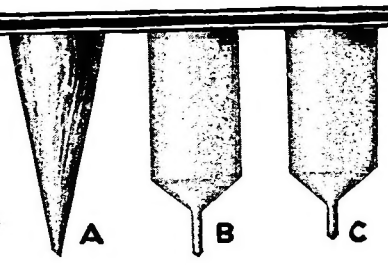

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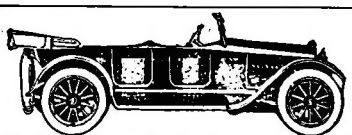

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By GORDON YOUNG

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THE HELLION

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By EARL ENNIS

A story of a wild horse and the man who tamed him.

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MID-JULY ISSUE

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July 3, 1919
VOL. 22 NO. 1

Flat Behind the Ears

A Complete Novelette

by Norman Springer

Author of "A Man and His Name," "The Winner," etc.

THE bosun ran into the corporal in Lime Street.

There is nothing singular about this. One is likely to run into almost anybody in Lime Street. Nor was this the first time the bosun had clapped eyes upon the soldier.

He had seen the corporal on board ship that very morning. He hadn't noticed him particularly; a bosun is a busy man with troubles of his own these topsy-turvy days when forecastles are manned chiefly by the odds and ends of the shoregoing trades—and, anyway, a trim, jaunty figure in uniform is not so uncommon a sight in Liverpool as to be particularly noticeable. Still, the bosun had glanced casually at the corporal as the latter stood on the bridge-deck talking to the Old Man and the mates, and he had noted the four stripes that told of four wounds, the medal and, most of all, the happy countenance. The soldier's face beamed with happiness. The bosun observed this because he, himself, was wearing an unhappy face.

Then the second mate mentioned the chap during the noon smoke.

"He's a Jack Canuck," said the second mate. "Discharged for wounds and so eager to get home he's got permission to sail with us instead of waiting a couple of weeks for the transport he was assigned to. My word, but he's the 'appy lad! Going home to a girl, I dare say."

" 'E's more likely to go to Davy Jones if 'e sails with me," remarked the bosun. " 'E will, and no mistake, if that 'Un devil is waiting outside for me. I'm surprized as 'ow you'll sail with me, mister, as knows all about me."

"Forget it, Bos," replied the second mate. "That 'Un devil has got your sheep, as the Yanks say. It's all luck, Bos, and luck is bound to change. Thousand to one you'll never clap eyes on your 'Un devil again. It's your brooding about it makes you feel the way you do. Brooding, that's what it is."

"Enough to make a bloke brood," said the bosun.

"Oh, rot!" exclaimed the second mate. "Why, there's Buffer Madden—you know about Buffer Madden? Just got his ship, and 'im not yet thirty. The *War Echo*, a new, five-thousand-ton boat. And he was blowed up six times last year without

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ever getting west of Ireland. He swore there was a curse on 'im and was about to go into the army, when his luck changed. He's been across God knows how many times since and never sighted a Fritz. Luck, that's all, Bos! Thousand to one you'll never see your 'Un devil again."

"A curse on 'im!" said the bosun. "Aye, and a curse on me!" Then he commenced to swear in a fashion that caused even the second mate to widen his eyes admiringly. "Well, I 'opes for the sake of you poor blokes what are my shipmates that I don't meet 'im again," he declared. "But, as for myself—well, all I want is to get my fingers on 'is bloomin' throat—that's all, just my fingers on 'is bloomin' throat!"

It was thinking about "that 'Un devil" and the slim prospect he had of ever getting his fingers on "'is bloomin' throat" that caused the bosun, that evening, to run into the corporal in Lime Street. As has been said, there was nothing singular about it. In fact, it would have been singular had the bosun avoided running into the corporal. He was rolling swiftly along the street, with his own peculiar, wallowing gait, head down, cogitating, and pedestrians meeting him had either to give way or get bumped. Several got bumped before the corporal got bumped.

But it was the collision with the corporal that bore consequences. If the corporal had not stepped out of the Flanders pub at that precise instant; if the bosun had been walking two feet farther west; if anything had prevented the meeting, it is not likely, a bosun being such a busy man and a soldier such a useless man on board ship, that the bosun would have made friends with the corporal.

Nothing did prevent the meeting. It happened. The corporal stepped out of the pub and found himself directly in the path of the onsweeping bosun. The bosun rammed him. The corporal, whose underpinning was none too steady, sat down hard upon the pavement, one leg curled gracefully beneath him, the other sticking straight out in the air.

"I beg your blinkin' pardon!" said the bosun, coming to a full stop. "I didn't see you, matey!"

"Pardon granted," replied the soldier with a good-natured laugh. "Especially since we are shipmates. You are the bosun of the *Battle Abbey*, aren't you? I thought I knew you. The captain pointed you out to me this morning and said you were the chap who was on the *British Prince*——"

The bosun began to swear at this. If the second mate could have heard him, he would have opened his eyes indeed, for the bosun swore even better than usual. The corporal, who could himself deliver a very round oath on occasion, listened to the outburst with appreciative interest.

"Pretty good," he commented when the bosun paused for breath. "I ain't heard better since I left France—and the mud. What's the jolly row, Bosun?"

"It's in 'ere," said the bosun, placing a hand upon his rotund midriff. "I'm thinking about it all the bloomin' time, and, when you says *British Prince*, I just 'ad to swear."

"Well, if you've finished thinking about it," asked the corporal, "would you mind lending me a hand? You see, my leg——"

"Ow, Gorblimme!" cried the bosun. He noticed for the first time the corporal's leg which stuck straight out in the air. It was, he saw, no limb of flesh and blood, but a man-made substitute. "Strike me, if I 'aven't bowled over a poor bloke what's a crip! 'Ere now, matey, steady is!" So far from lending a hand, the bosun leaned over the other and put his arms about him and lifted him bodily to his feet. "I 'opes you won't 'old it against me, for I didn't see you," he added contritely, commencing to brush off the khaki uniform.

"It's all right. No harm done," declared the soldier. "Much my fault as yours, Bosun," he added generously. "Might happen to anybody."

"I was walking along thinking about it," explained the bosun. He shook his head soberly. "I 'ave things to think about, I 'ave."

"Dry work—thinking," commented the corporal. "Now here's a pub handy, and, seeing we've met and are shipmates, why, maybe you'll have a wet with me?"

The bosun replied he would be struck pink if he wouldn't be just proud to 'ave a wet with a nobby bloke like the corporal.

A COUPLE of moments later the bosun wiped the foam off his mustache and leaned back in his chair. Because he was still conscience-stricken at having bowled over a poor bloke who was a crip, he renewed his apologies.

"I ain't myself these days," he told the

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Canadian. "I 'ave my troubles. I think too much—that's it. I'm just as like as not to walk off the bloomin' dock-end, what with so much thinking. Maybe that's what I ought to do—walk off the bloomin' dock-end!"

"Oh, come now, Bosun; there isn't any trouble worth thinking like that!" exclaimed the soldier.

"My trouble is," said the bosun. He solaced himself for a moment with the mug and then eyed his companion darkly. "I can see the ruddy fishes scoffing you," he remarked.

"What's that?" cried the startled corporal.

"I can see you feeding the ruddy fishes," said the bosun firmly.

"First you knock me down, and then you drown me!" complained the corporal. "Drink up, Bosun—and cheer up!"

"The second mate told me about you," went on the bosun. "'E says you was so anxious to reach 'ome you were sailing in an old tramp like the *Battle Abbey*, instead of waiting for a transport. Well, I says to you, matey, if you want to see your bloomin' 'ome again, you better wait for your bloomin' transport, if you 'ave to wait a bloomin' year! Because why, says you. Because, says I, I'm bosun of the *Battle Abbey*, and I'm a bloomin' Jonah—that's why! Because that 'Un devil gets every ship I sails in—that's why!"

The corporal was amused.

"Say, I'm just from two years out there," he told the bosun. "You can't get my wind up with that kind of a yarn."

"I'm not trying to get your wind up," asserted the bosun. "It's Gospel, I'm telling you. That 'Un devil is waiting outside for me this very minute, like as not!"

"Let him wait," said the corporal. "You can't frighten me with your Huns, Bosun. The only Huns that have my number I left behind in France."

"And don't you feel a bit squeamish when you think of your being so close-like to 'ome—and the subs we'll 'ave to get by? You're going 'ome to a girl, maybe? So the second mate says."

The soldier grinned.

"Don't know how he knew," he remarked. "But I am. That's why I'm in a hurry. Subs won't stop me—they haven't got my number. My girl, she's just a tidy little piece—and true, I tell you! Here!"

He drew a little oval frame out of the breast pocket of his tunic and passed it to the sailor.

"That's her," he said. "That's my girl. Ain't she the tidy little piece, now? And you want to know why I'm in such a hurry to get home I won't wait for the convoy? Well, she's why! I wrote to her from hospital and told her about my foot and said maybe she'd better get a whole man. She wrote back I was her man with or without feet and she had a good job and I was to come home at once. Yes, sir, that's what she wrote! So I'm going home to make her quit that good job, because I got one leg and two good arms left, and they'll make the living all right. Think I'd wait two whole weeks when I can get standing-room in your tub? Why, I'll be in Toronto in two weeks—or nearly there!"

The bosun looked at the happy, girlish face of the "tidy little piece" that regarded him from the oval frame. Then he looked at the happy, boyish face that regarded him from across the table. Then he shook his own grizzled, worried head.

"You're more like to be in Davy Jones' locker, lad," he said, gravely. "It ain't a yarn I'm trying to get your wind up with; I'd bloomin' well know better than to try that dodge on a bloke what's been through it out there and what wears that medal you got on your coat! And it ain't that I object to your sailing with me, Corp! Gorblimme, I'm just proud to be shipmates with you! But it's just like I told you—if you want to get 'ome safe to your little girl, you better wait for the transport.

"'E don't bother transports, that 'Un devil don't—they 'ave guns and speed, and they 'aven't got Jonahs in their crews! 'E waits for cargo-boats that 'ave Jonahs aboard—a Jonah like me! That's what I am, and that 'Un devil is waiting out there for me this blessed minute!"

The bosun suddenly stretched his arms above his head and cried passionately:

"If I only 'ad my fingers on 'is bloomin' throat! That's all—my fingers on 'is bloomin' throat!"

The corporal was startled and interested.

"Here, here, what's the row all about?" he demanded.

The bosun was abashed by his own outburst. He hurriedly ordered up fresh beer, and then, after it had arrived and he and

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the corporal had touched mugs, he attempted an explanation.

"It's my nerves," he told the soldier. "I 'ave a bad case of nerves, I 'ave. That 'Un devil!" He glanced shrewdly at the soldier and asked suddenly, "'E 'asn't got your number, says you? I've heard as how you blokes out there come to believe that—as 'ow what's got to 'appen just 'appens, and no use worrying about it?"

The corporal's own face became sober, and, when he replied, it was hesitatingly.

"Why, yes—that's just how it is," he said. "Just fate. A Fritz has your number, or he hasn't got your number. No use worrying or trying to dodge; if you are going to click it, you click it. That's why you can't get my wind with your yarns, Bosun—the Hun that has my number is in France."

"Aye?" prompted the bosun eagerly.

The corporal smiled at the other's deep interest.

"Well, I'll tell you how I got my D. C. M.—and my blighty," he went on. "That'll show you how it is.

"My medal now—well, that happened at Pop last Fall. I was a grenadier, a bomber, out there, Bosun. The battalion was carrying out a little local operation, and my squad was out to mop up a pill-box that was holding up the advance. Well—every one of my mates clicked it; all eight of them clicked it, Bosun! Me—I was just as big a mark as my mates—had no better cover, and I didn't get touched. I tossed three Mills and a Hairbrush into that box from forty yards, and that was the end of those Fritzies. Now, how did it happen that way? Because those Fritzies were Prussians, and Prussians didn't have my number. I had theirs. That's how it happened."

"Gorblimme!" said the bosun.

"BUT I clicked it four times out there," went on the corporal. "Yes, sir—four wounds. First time was at Plugstreet. We raided a trench and grabbed some prisoners, and I got it through the leg getting back. We identified the prisoners as 162nd Bavarians. Well—that was all right. Second time I got hit was at Lens. We had a scrimmage in the coal-yard with some 162nd Bavarians, and I got another little pill. I said, 'Well, this is —— queer!'

"Third time was at Vimy. We tore the guts out of a battalion we found was the 162nd Bavarians, and I got drilled through the shoulder by a machine-gun. I knew what it was this time. Just fate. These Bavarians, these 162nd Bavarians, had my number! And the last time was at the Somme. When we took over, the blokes we relieved said the 162nd Bavarians were opposite. I said, 'Here's where I get it again!' And, sure enough, some Bavarian swine heaved an oyster-shell bomb into the trench where I and my mates were standing, and I had no more time than to slap my foot on it and press it into the mud when it went off, and so did my foot!

"That's just how it is out there, Bosun. And everywhere else, I dare say. Now there were Prussians and Saxons and God knows what all had their chances at me, but only Bavarians could get me. The way I figure it, Bavarians are round heads, and rounds heads have my number. Prussians, now, are flat behind the ears, and I got their numbers. I can get a Prussian every time. It's just fate, Bosun."

The bosun thought it over.

"Maybe that's so out there," he said. "But 'ow about the 'igh seas? Answer that, Corp! 'Ow about ships? Do you think as how a certain 'Un devil as has a fish could 'ave a bloke's number?"

"Why not?" said the corporal.

"But 'e don't get the bloke," replied the bosun. "'E gets the ship the bloke is in—and all his poor shipmates."

"Then he hasn't got the bloke's number; he has the shipmates' numbers," asserted the corporal. "That bloke—he's lucky."

"I wish I could think so," was the bosun's grave response. "Oh, but I wish I could think so! I think and think, and sometimes I think as 'ow this certain bloke—which is myself, Corp—has a curse upon 'im. Do you think as 'ow a bloke could 'ave a curse on 'im, Corp?"

"No; I ain't superstitious," answered the corporal.

"That's 'ow I come to bump you over—thinking about it," went on the bosun. "Going over my past life—that's what I was doing." The bosun wagged mournfully his sinful old head. "I know I ain't been no hangel, Corp, but, Gorblimme, I 'aven't done nothing for to 'ave a bloomin' curse put on me! 'Ere, now—one time when I was a young lad, I knifed a bloke in Flinders Street, Melbourne. But, seeing as 'ow

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'e started the row and as 'ow 'e was trying to knife me at the time, I never counted that as a big sin. Would you?"

"No," said the soldier.

"Another time," went on the bosun, "I 'ad wives—one in 'Ull and one in Boston. But, seeing as 'ow I was a seagoing man, and as 'ow they never knew each other, and as 'ow the 'Ull lass took up with a bloomin' soldier—beggin' your pardon, Corp—while I was at sea, and as 'ow I come 'ome and found the Boston lass was married to a fireman what sailed on the coast before she married me, and 'e was 'ome before me; why, I never counted that as a big sin. Would you, Corp?"

"Not at all," said the corporal.

"And them's the worstest things I ever done," declared the bosun. "They ain't bad enough for to 'ave a curse put on me, are they now?"

"Of course not," replied the soldier. "Just nonsense, curses and such things. Superstitions, I call them."

"Oh, are they then?" queried the bosun. "Then 'ow do you explain that 'Un devil? I'm a lucky bloke, says you; 'e hasn't got my number, but 'e has my shipmates'! Gorblimme, Corp, I feel like a 'angman going to sea these days. That 'Un devil gets every ship I join and all 'ands except myself. 'Ow do you explain it? The captain—you told me as 'ow the skipper pointed me out and told you about me?"

"He just said you were the survivor of the *British Prince*," answered the corporal.

"Didn't 'e tell you any more? About the *'Olyrood* or the *Castle Craig?*" asked the bosun.

"No. What about them? Ships?"

"They was ships," said the bosun solemnly. "But I sailed in them, and that 'Un devil got them. 'Ere—I'll tell you 'ow it was, and then you tell me if it isn't a curse."

"Right-o," said the corporal. He caught the barmaid's eye and held up two fingers. "Here's a couple of fresh mugs, Bosun. Wet your tongue, and fire away."

The bosun wet his tongue—liberally—and commenced.

"Now, mind, it ain't that I'm squealing, Corp. I'm a Britisher, and I can stand as much 'ell as the next man. When a bloke goes to sea nowadays, 'e expects either to get blowed up or not blowed up. It ain't the torpedoing; I been blowed up two times since it begun, and I always looked on it as part of the game. Though it does come so sudden-like it makes a bloke swear. But it ain't torpedoes; it's just that bloomin' 'Un devil!

"'E don't use torpedoes—that 'Un devil. Leastways, not on ships of the class I'm in. Shells and bombs. The bloomin' pirate! The 'atchet-faced swab! The—the—oh, well, I'll swear at 'im after a while. I never clapped eyes on 'im till January, this year. I joined the *'Olyrood*, which was a tanker, and we left the Pool, 'ere, to go across light. January, and, oh, perishin' cold. This 'Un devil pops up on us about four 'undred miles west o' Ireland and says 'Ow do' nice as you please, with 'alf a dozen shells which knocked our deck-'amper about something shocking.

"Well, we didn't 'ave any guns on the *'Olyrood*, any more than we got them on the *Battle Abbey;* so we didn't lose time taking to the boats, the *'Olyrood* being a twelve-knot boat and that 'Un devil 'aving a bloomin' big fish, good for about twenty, at least. January, and perishin' cold it was, but we launched the boats, 'im shelling us the while, and we all got away except four 'ands a shot had got in the fo'c'sle.

"That 'Un devil—'e slides up close to us, and 'e calls all the boats alongside 'im. 'Is crew is on deck, mostly, and 'e, 'imself, standing in the door of the bloomin' conning-tower—a lean, 'atchet-faced bloke 'e is, the bloomin' murderer! 'E orders our captain out on board 'im and sends him below into the insides of the bloomin' thing. Then an officer and three men, with a box they carried mighty careful, got into the captain's boat, which I'm in, and we got to pull them to the *'Olyrood.* They kill 'er with bombs they took out of the box, these 'Uns did, and we rowed them back to their fish. And then what?

"Why that blighter of an 'Un devil, standing there in 'is conning-tower—'e has 'is men 'eave overside our food and water! Then 'e has his 'Uns shove us off, and 'e says to us in good Henglish, 'e says, 'Bum voyage!' The long, 'atchet-faced murderer, that's what 'e says; and with that 'e, after all the rest of them, goes below, and they close the conning-tower, and pretty soon the fish goes under. And there we were, three boats of us, four 'undred mile off-shore, without a swallow of water, in the perishin' cold—and a January blow coming on!

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"Five days and nights we 'ad of it, and my boat rode out the gale. The other two boats we never saw after the first night —nor has anybody else seen them since! There was nine men in my boat—and 'ow many do you think was left when the patrol picked us up? Just two! Me and the steward—and 'e gave up and croaked before the patrol got to port. Me—I went to 'orspital, and they cut off my two big toes, which was froze, they says, which is why I wobbles so when I walk, Corp. That 'Un devil 'as made a crip of me, too!

"BUT I didn't 'old it so 'ard against 'im. Not then. I didn't think much about it. I just thought, ' 'E's a proper cruel 'Un, and no mistake, and I'd like to 'ave my fingers on 'is bloomin' throat!' That's all I thought about it. When they let me out of 'orspital, I went over to Cardiff and joined the *Castle Craig*, a little three-thousand-ton boat, which was going out to the Rock with coals.

"We just got out into the bay when, just at the end of the first dog-watch, up pops this identical 'Un about a mile to port of us. Nobody spotted 'im till after 'is first shell landed fair on our poop and put the steam steerin'-gear out of commission. We 'ad a bit of a three-inch gun on our fo'c'sle-'ead, what had been pitched out of the navy on account of being no good, and we tried to answer 'im and stand 'im off with it. Gorblimme, that 'Un devil just lay out of range and 'ammered —— out of us. So we took to boats.

"Then, just like with the *'Olyrood*, 'e ranges up to the boats and takes our skipper aboard 'im for prisoner. Standing in 'is conning-tower door the same way, 'e was, the blasted pirate! The rest of us in the captain's boat 'ad to pull 'alf dozen bloody 'Uns off to the ship, where they touched off some bombs. And, while we did this, do you know what that 'Un devil done? 'E 'ad target-practise with the other boats! Aye, strike me dead if 'e didn't! Blew them to bits with shrapnel, and there was my mates drowning before my eyes—and me not able to do a thing to 'elp them! That's what that swivel-eyed, 'atchet-faced butcher did!

"And, when we pulled the 'Uns back after their finishing off the poor old *Castle Craig*, 'e 'ad target-practise with us. S' 'elp me, 'e did! 'E sings out to us, the grinnin' beast, and says, 'I've 'eard as 'ow Henglishmen are fond o' sports!' Says 'e, 'I'll play a fine game with you; we'll see if you can row faster than I can shoot!' That's what 'e says, or words to that effect, the—the—oh, well——

"There we was in the captain's boat, pulling to break our bloomin' 'earts, knowing, you see, what 'ad 'appened to our shipmates. 'E shelled us. 'E shot at us. 'E shot ahead and astern and to port and to starboard, and then, when we 'oped maybe we'd get off, 'e dropped one plump in the middle of us. There was fine, 'earty young lads went down like they was sewed in canvas with grate-bars at their feet, and there was me, what can't swim a stroke, 'anging all alone to the wreck of the boat. I 'ung there all night and was picked up at dawn by a destroyer what had 'eard our wireless we sent before we launched the boats, and was lookin' about for survivors.

"But still, Corp, I didn't think so much about it. Not about it being such a rum go this 'Un devil getting my ship twice running, I mean. Oh, but I thought what 'e 'ad done, strong enough! Aye, it made me fair wild to think of my poor mates and 'ow 'e stood there on 'is bloomin' murderer with a grin on 'is cruel, 'atchet face and 'ow I'd die 'appy if I could get my fingers on 'is bloomin' throat! I thought of that—my ruddy oath I did! But I never thought for a minute that maybe it was a curse-like on me what gave that 'Un devil the bulge, so to speak, on any ship I was in.

"That came later. The destroyer dropped me at a Channel port, and, after a couple of days' fine scoffin's and dossin's in 'orspital, I went to Lunnon and joined the *British Prince*, to 'Alifax and York. You know about that, don't you? Aye, it made a stink, that did. Pretty rotten, even for the 'Uns! We was three days out when 'e meets us. I knew it was that 'Un devil this time before ever 'e was close enough for me to recognize 'is fish or to see 'im standing in the 'atch. I knew it was 'im! I felt it, Corp. Sent a few shells into us, and we abandoned ship.

"Well, 'e 'ad a new dodge for us this time, the murderin' brute! First 'e took the skipper aboard and sent 'im below. Then 'e made all 'ands leave the boats and line up on the for'rd deck of the submarine—all 'ands, that is, save us in the skipper's boat. We 'ad to pull the 'Uns off to the ship with

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their bombs and pull them back when they 'ad finished the poor old girl. Then 'e made us line up on the deck along with the rest.

"Then that 'Un devil cast adrift the boats. S' 'elp me, yes! With all 'ands lined up on 'is deck, thinking we were in for a trip to 'Unland and wondering 'ow 'e could put so many of us down below. Aye, that's what we thought, all 'ands—except me, what knew the 'atchet-faced devil, and I was 'oping against 'ope. Even I didn't guess what 'e was up to.

" 'E cast adrift our boats, and then 'e, and 'is men go below and close the conning-tower 'atch. The other 'atches, by the guns, were already closed. There we were, the 'ole crew of the *British Prince* except the skipper, lined up on the deck—thirty-seven of us. First thing we know the bloomin' fish is moving along, and the sea breaking about our knees. Then, just sudden-like, she goes down from under us and leaves all 'ands in the water! Aye, the rotten, bloodthirsty—oh, well, what's the use o' swearing!

"The second engineer, who could swim like a ruddy fish, 'e grabbed me and kept me up for 'alf an hour, along with the 'elp of my life-belt. Then, when it 'ad got pretty dark—it bein' late in the day when that 'Un devil got us—why, what comes along but one of our own boats the devil 'ad cast adrift. We didn't see it till it 'ad floated right on top o' us, and it hit the second on the 'ead, and 'e went under before I could grab 'im. Me—I grabbed the gun'le and 'oisted myself aboard.

"Same thing as before, Corp. Two days alone in that boat, with lashin's of scoffin's and drink; so I didn't suffer none. Then a destroyer picked me up. Me, what would just as soon been dead! Aye, that I would, for I knew just what was what this time! There's a curse on me, that's what, and that 'Un devil gets every ship I sails in. 'E uses me! I'm bait, that's what!

"Now I've joined the *Battle Abbey*. Well, 'e'll get us, no fear. I've told all 'ands about it, but they laugh; they think I'm balmy—Gorblimme, they do! But 'e'll get us, and that's just the reason I'm sailing. I won't be the sole survivor this time, Corp, s' 'elp me 'Eaven I won't! I'm 'oping 'e'll try that little stunt of lining us up on 'is deck. If 'e does, there ain't no power is going to keep my 'ands off 'is bloomin' throat, strike me dead, there ain't.

"If it wasn't for that chance of my getting my 'ands on 'im, I'd never set foot on a ship again. I'd go in the army—or in munitions if they wouldn't 'ave me in the army. But I got a feeling, Corp, as 'ow I might get a crack at 'im, and that's why I'm sailing on the *Battle Abbey*. What if the other 'Uns do finish me off; I'd go 'appy if I could take that 'Un devil with me!"

"He's a bad one, sure enough," commented the corporal. "But I think you have the wrong idea, altogether, Bosun. You're superstitious; that's what's wrong."

"Then you don't think as 'ow I 'ave a curse on me or that this 'Un 'as my number, as you call it?" asked the bosun.

"Of course not," replied the corporal. "It stands to reason he ain't got your number; he's had three cracks at you, and you've got away each time. He had your shipmates' numbers. And, as for the curse—why, that's nonsense; that's superstition, that is. It was just luck you happened to be in ships with fellows whose numbers he had. Like enough he's got plenty other ships and other chaps."

"Nonsense, is it?" cried the bosun hotly. "You wouldn't call it nonsense if you saw your mates bloomin' well murdered before your eyes time after time!"

"DON'T you think I've seen my mates killed off?" said the soldier. "Why, this Hun devil of yours is a blooming angel beside some of the brutes I met up with out there. Drowning men and sending them west with shrap—why, that's sort of gentle for a Hun! What if you saw your mates staked out in barb-wire? Or lying wounded out in front and being potted at by the devils, and you not able to go get them in? Or to come across your best chum with his throat cut and his body mutilated? Those are Hun tricks for you! That's what we see them do out there!

"But we don't feel as how there's a curse on us. Not much. The curse is on them, and, by ——, they'll know it before this war is over! That's the way we feel about it."

The bosun shook his head moodily.

"Aye, but I 'ave that sort of rum feelin' about it," he confided. " 'E's got me three times runnin', and I got that feelin' 'e'll get the *Battle Abbey*, too."

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"Just superstition," insisted the corporal. "There ain't a blessed thing to back up your hunch. Get the *Battle Abbey?* Not much! I know he won't get me, because the Hun who has my number is in France. It ain't likely your Hun devil belongs to the 162nd Bavarians, is it, him being a sailor and in the navy? Well, then, I'm safe, and I'm sailing on the *Battle Abbey.*"

"'E might get all 'ands but you," objected the bosun.

"Well, then you won't be sole survivor," said the corporal. "Come—forget it, Bosun, and drink up to a fast trip and fair weather. Here's how and —— the Huns!"

The bosun drank but grumbled. "Easy enough for you army blokes to say, 'Forget it,'" said he. "It's not so 'ard on you blokes to 'ave your mates murdered before your bloomin' eyes, because you got a chance to fight back at the blighters. But sailormen, us blokes in the merchant service and sailing in cargo-boats, why—we just got to take it without fighting. That's the 'ard part, Corp. You could throw bombs at the 'Uns; I can only tumble into a boat and break my back on a bloomin' oar and watch my mates go under, without ever getting a crack at the devil what sends them down. That's the 'ard part, Corp. But, if 'e gets the *Battle Abbey* and does the *British Prince* stunt, s' 'elp me, I'll get a crack at 'im!"

"Why don't you bomb him out?" asked the corporal. "I thought that was how our chaps got most of the U-boats—bombs?"

"Oh, aye—depth-bombs," said the bosun. "The patrols, and some of the big ships carry them, but not old boxes like the *Battle Abbey.* And, as for 'eaving bombs at 'im like you do out there—well, that would be a satisfaction, that would! 'Ow far can you 'eave one, Corp?"

"Forty to fifty yards on an average," was the answer. "I can place them at sixty—but then I was the best thrower in my battalion."

"Sixty yards," remarked the bosun, "and that 'Un devil anywhere from five hundred yards to a couple of miles away! No bloomin' chance. But that would be a lark, now, if a bloke could only wipe the grin off the 'atchet-face of 'im with one of them things. What are they like, Corp?"

"Oh, there are different kinds," answered the corporal, a grenadier's proper pride in his voice. "Grenades is a department of war all by itself, as the books say. The British army has a dozen different kinds; so has the French, and Fritz has a full deck of his own. I like the Mills best. Pineapples we call them out there. Nice little dears, pineapples are; just fit a chap's hand, and you can place them pretty sure if you ever played baseball. Overhand toss, though. Then there's the stick percussion and Hales and Hairbrushes—all handy in their way. But I like pineapples best. I'll show you one tomorrow; I have some in my dunnage."

"Gorblimme, 'ave you?" exclaimed the bosun.

"Three," affirmed the soldier. "Taking them home for souvenirs. I always intended to take some remembrances-like home with me, and I watched my chance and nipped these at the evacuation hospital. All the other souvenirs I had I lost when I was sent down wounded."

"Lorlumme—bombs—souvenirs!" said the bosun.

"I want them for the time when me and my girl have a nice little home of our own," explained the soldier. "You see, my old man was in the Riel Rebellion up in the Northwest, and he brought home three arrows he took away from Chief Mushface Something-or-other, and I remember how proud my mother always was of those arrows. Had them hanging over the mantel in the parlor, and she always showed them to visitors and told them about my old man fighting Indians. Well, I been thinking for a long time as how three pineapples would look pretty good over my parlor mantel, and my little wife could tell everybody as how her man threw them things in the war and blew hundreds of Huns to —— with them. They won't take up much room, either."

"Strike me pink, I'm glad I ain't marryin' you!" commented the bosun. "Bombs on 'is mantel—oh, my ruddy eye! What if a visitor 'appens to drop one? Blimme, Corp, I was going to ask you if you wanted to bunk in with me on the way across, there being a spare bunk in my room on account of us not signin' a carpenter. But—well, I don't mind getting blowed up from the outside of the ship so very much, such being part o' the game, you might say; but being blowed up from the inside, in your own bloomin' bunk so to speak—blimme, no!"

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"Why, they a.in't alive," said the corporal. "You could play football with them, and they wouldn't let go—that is, not likely to. Of course, I could make them alive; I got a couple of igniters, too. But the way I carry them they are just as safe as—well, oranges, say. More danger in smoking your pipe in bed, Bosun, than in playing catch with my pineapples—likely to set fire to yourself smoking in bed."

"I don't smoke in bed; I chews," replied the bosun. "And you won't find me playing catch with your pineapples or playing anything else with them. Still, if the bloomin' things are as safe as you say, you might move into my room, if you like, when you go aboard. The second mate told me you were going to 'ave the spare bunk in the steward's room; well, confidential-like and just between you and me, Corp, because I'm a bloke what don't like to 'ave 'ard feelings with my shipmates, even with bloomin' stewards—why, just dropping a 'int, like, that steward ain't very fond o' soap and water, and 'e snores like a whale!"

"Why, thanks, Bosun," promptly responded the corporal. "I'll certainly move into your room if you'll have me. To tell you the truth, I didn't like the looks of that steward when I met him, but, being so anxious to get home, I'd been willing to bunk up with the rats in the bilges. And don't get the wind up about my pineapples, Bosun; why, there's more danger in a bottle of seltzer. If we decide to touch them off, we'll hand them to your Hun devil, hey? Another half pint, Bosun?"

The bosun had it—willingly.

"Oh, that would be 'eavenly," he then remarked, " 'anding one of them to that 'Un devil! Strike me dead, I can just see 'im going up in a 'alf dozen pieces! The bloomin' pirate! The square-'eaded, 'atchet-faced swine! The—the——"

"That's right—let it out," encouraged the corporal. "You're all bottled up; you'll feel better if you uncork. Just uncork, Bosun!"

So the bosun leaned back in his chair and uncorked.

II

THE night was thick, though calm, and the *Battle Abbey*, without lights and almost without noise, was plowing through the mist at a good thirteen knots. Her lumbering, single-screw, triple-expansion engine was turning up full eighty turns, which, as the chief engineer told the captain in the closely curtained and dimly lighted chart-room, was a full dozen turns per minute too many for the good of the Babbit in the bearings.

"Babbit be dashed," said the skipper. "Give her all she'll stand, Mac, and then give her some more. I'd rather be blowed up by my own boilers than by a Fritz."

"Oh, the boilers will stand it," assured the chief. "I looked to them myself. And the bearings will have to stand it—though 'tis a sinful waste of oil, sir!"

"Drown the bearings in oil, if you wish, but keep up the speed," answered the captain. "My word, we've been lucky so far; we're through the worst waters already, and another day will see us practically safe. If this blessed weather only holds! Another day of it, and you can coddle your old rattletraps down below to your heart's content, Mac!"

"They'll need some coddling after this," said the chief. "And so shall we. A whole blessed watch in bunk, eh? Though I own I've had it a bit better than you—I have had a nap."

"Believe I'll risk forty winks here on the lounge," said the captain. "I feel the need of it, rather."

In truth he did; looked the need as well, for his face was gray and drawn, showing plainly the strain of the seventy-two-hour vigil just endured.

The chief engineer nodded approvingly; the lounge in the chart-room was just about as handy to the center of things as the bridge itself, and the Old Man did look seedy! It was a pity to admit it, even without words, reflected the chief, but the Old Man wasn't as young as he used to be. This dodging tin fish for days at a time, without rest, was a job that told on a man; the skipper had better grab his forty winks while he had the chance, for it would be a proper bad go, and no mistake, if he broke under the strain in case anything did happen. As for himself—well, he wouldn't brag even to himself, but, even if he had more gray in his hair, he had more life in his body. No danger of him breaking!

He said aloud he thought forty winks a good idea and that he'd go below and shake up the swabs in the stokehold and get another turn out of her, by heaven!

If the captain and chief engineer carried

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their loads of care about with them during the silent watches, so did the bosun carry his load of care. Not that the strain was telling in the bosun's appearance; he had no need of forty winks; he was getting his full six hours. Yet was he hag-ridden with a care. He was, at the moment, reposing in his bunk, up for'ard in the little room reserved for the tradesmen. Sleeping, but not peacefully. This was the bosun's care; he could not sleep peacefully.

The bosun blamed that 'Un devil, though he admitted the life-preserver had something to do with it. Life-preservers are handy things to have on under certain conditions, but they do not make comfortable nightgowns. Though many a lad those days woke up suddenly, congratulating himself upon donning his cork vest before going to bed. The bosun wore his without complaint, but he didn't like it. He was a heavy man and liked a soft couch; he said the life-preserver made him dream, and he could dream of no one save that 'Un devil.

He was dreaming now. He was lying flat on his back in his bunk, which was an upper one, his head rolling restlessly upon his gunny-down pillow, an odd and arresting figure could one's eyes have pierced the darkness of the room. Even in his shore-going togs of peace the bosun's was a corpulent figure; now, in full sea rig—minus boots—with his cork vest strapped about him, he rather resembled a miniature volcanic mount on the eve of eruption. For his mouth was open and emitting sounds which might be likened to the sounds made by a deep-throated bulldog worrying a bone. Growling-gleeful sort of sounds.

For the bosun was dreaming the happiest dream he had dreamed in many a day. Always, before, his dreams were filled with horror; he lived over terrible hours in open boats; he found himself helpless beneath the cruel, gloating gaze of that 'Un devil; he awoke with the cries of his murdered shipmates in his ears. But this dream was different—oh, so different!

He was standing on the forward deck of that 'Un devil's fish—even as he had stood there with his shipmates from the *British Prince*. This time his only companion was the corporal, who stood by his side, holding in his right hand a large, firm potato. One other man there was on that deck—and he was spread-eagled to ring-bolts in the deck before the conning-tower. The bosun gloated upon this bound figure, and the latter, twisting and writhing in his bonds, turned a terror-stricken, pleading face toward the bosun.

" 'Ave mercy!" the bosun heard himself say. "Did you 'ave mercy on my shipmates? Hey—you 'atchet-faced scut? No! Nor will I 'ave mercy! Let the 'Un devil 'ave it, Corp!"

Whereupon the corporal remarked:

"Thirty yards, about! All right—here she goes!"

His right arm swung stiffly a full half-circle, and, when his hand was overhead, the potato left his grasp. It described a graceful arc in the air and descended upon the screaming wretch fastened to the deck. It fell swiftly, and the bosun stood on his toes, his mouth open, his whole body tingling with eagerness to hear the shattering roar of the explosion when the potato struck his enemy and blew him to bits. His very heart suspended beating. The potato struck; his eyes were blinded with a flare of flame— but, instead of the welcome roar he awaited, his ears were saluted with soft-spoken words in the voice of the second mate.

"Hey—Bos! Come out of it, Bos—you're rousin' the ship!"

The bosun opened his eyes, to find his face bathed in the ray from an electric torch and to discern dimly the bulk of the speaker's body by the side of his bunk.

"Blimme—what the—" he began.

"Oh, come to at last, have you?" commented the voice. "My oath, you've 'ad a proper one tonight. Your 'Un devil must have been skinning you alive. I could hear you snortin' and gurglin' from the bridge."

"You 'aven't waked a bloke up to tell 'im 'e was snorin' a bit?" demanded the bosun.

"Snoring!" echoed the other. "Bos, you was banging away like the Western Front! I thought the soldier would rouse you out of it, but he's sleeping away like a baby. Too used to noise to mind a whale snortin' above him, I take it. I didn't know but you'd got that belt twisted afoul your neck and was chokin' to death in your sleep! And, if you was dreaming about your 'Un devil, I was afraid you'd let go a beller like I know you can beller and tell any Fritz who might be within three miles that we were about! Quiet is the word these watches, you know, Bos!"

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With which admonition the ray of light was switched off and the second mate moved toward the door, which the bosun now perceived was open, and through which he could see the black blots of the deck gear and fore hatch.

" 'Ere, mister, what time?" he called after the retreating form.

"Four bells, just past," was the answer, and the officer closed the door behind him.

Four bells! The bosun muttered bitter curses into the murky atmosphere of the room. He had a keen sense of grievance. To be roused out of sleep at four bells in the mid-watch—which is the ungodly hour of 2 A.M., if you would know—because of a snort or a snore or some other gentle sleep-noise is enough to give any bloke a sense of grievance.

ORDINARILY the bosun would not have much cared. If he had been experiencing one of his usual dreams about that 'Un devil, one of those horrid nightmares that left him gasping and shaking to his very toes, he would have thanked the second mate for shaking him out of it—as he had thanked him more than once since he joined the ship. But this one time, when he had had the bulge on the 'atchet-faced brute and another instant would have delighted his eyes with the sight of the blankety-blank swab going aloft in sections—why, to rouse a bloke at such a time was a blooming crime, no less!

The bosun said it was. He said to his gunny-down pillow, strike 'im pink, but the bloomin' second mate 'ad the wind up proper to go snooping around listening to sailor-men snore and rousing them up for fear a little 'eavy breathing would bring a fish down on them! He said lots of other things about the second mate, also.

Then he lay wakeful, thinking about the dream, living again those delicious, soul-satisfying moments. Aye, he 'ad the devil proper that time, if any one should arsk, trussed up to the ring-bolts in the deck! He remembered the ring-bolts in the deck of the submarine very well indeed, and, now he thought about it, they seemed to have been placed there for the very purpose of trussing up the enemy.

He wondered how that 'Un devil came to be trussed up. He couldn't remember that part of the dream. Silly things, dreams. If a bloke could do awake what he does asleep! How had he and the corporal ever got near enough to the blighter, undetected, to lay hands on him or to heave anything at him?

And then heaving a spud at him! That was a rum go, that was; he'd have to tell corp about it—aye, and the second mate, too! The bosun grinned to himself as he thought about it. He didn't know much about the meaning of dreams, though he regarded them with a certain suspicion, not untinged with horror, of being in some mysterious fashion harbingers of the future. Uncanny things. He often puzzled over his dreams, especially since this great trouble had come upon him, seeking to find in his weird sleep-adventuring some promise of coming vengeance. He had never heard of Dr. Freud's books; he would have scoffed had he heard. For he had lost faith in book-lore when it came to dreams.

One time in Sydney he spent half a crown for a "Lover's Dream Book," because he had a heavy crush on the barmaid of the Silver Pheasant, and the youthful sprig of Zion averred the volume, if faithfully consulted of a morning, would keep him truly posted as to the lady's feelings while he was in far seas.

"Ven she dinks off you, you dream off her," the merchant explained. "Ziss book vill say if she dinks goot or bad. So you know if she iss drue."

The bosun dreamed consistently and read the book religiously all the way to the Cape and back. The book told him Molly was true. When he got ashore, he found she wasn't. So he dropped the "Lover's Dream Book" over the side and swore dreams were a rum go any way you looked at them. This was a good many years ago, and the bosun had wondered about many dreams since then. And these later days, when he walked about with head bowed beneath his heavy curse, he swore more earnestly than ever they were a rum go.

Who could explain them, interpret them? A dream meant something, he felt. What? This dream just past—the corporal and himself on the submarine's deck—wasn't that a rum go? Heaving spuds at that 'Un devil! But that wasn't the rum part of it. He understood why the soldier had a potato. So would that blasted second mate when he told him about it!

The corporal had hurled a potato in the dream because—well, because the bosun

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was so interested in pineapple bombs. Pineapples had loomed large in the bosun's mind the past three days. They fascinated him and had ever since his talk with the corporal over the beer. His old longing to "get 'is fingers on 'is bloomin' throat" had given place to an even stronger desire to see " 'im hoisted on a pineapple."

The first day out the bosun thought about the soldier's dunnage all during the long daylight hours. When he went below to find the corporal comfortably established as his bunkie, his keen curiosity promptly found voice.

" 'Ave you really got them things, Corp?" he demanded. "Let's take a squint at them."

The corporal readily complied, the eager conceit of the specialist in his manner. He opened the telescope basket that contained the bulk of his belongings and extracted from beneath two piles of clothing a small canvas bag. The bosun's suspicion that the soldier had been spoofing him about the bombs vanished.

The pineapples reposed in cotton-batting wrappings in the bag—not, as the corporal explained, because there was any danger of there going pop-o, but because he had spent a good many hours polishing them up with emery-paper, and he didn't intend their luster should be marred before he got them home. Didn't the bosun think they were nobby-looking little dears?

The bosun said he did. He took one of the ovals in his hand, squeezed gently the ridged squares, each one gleaming evidence of the corporal's industry, hefted it gingerly and audibly wondered what would 'appen to a bloke if the bloomin' thing did 'appen to go pop-o!

"You wouldn't know anything about it," consoled the corporal. "Napoo for you—and me, too. But that won't happen. It ain't alive. Here—I'll show you how you make one alive!"

He took the missile and, suiting action to words, illustrated to the fascinated sailor just how a pineapple was prepared for a deadly voyage through the air.

"First you unscrew the base-plug—so," said the corporal. "See the insides of the thing, Bos? Then you insert the igniter—here, in this little tin box I keep them—so! Then you screw the plug in again—so. Now she's alive, Bos!

"But she can't let go, because of this safety-pin—see! The safety-pin holds this lever down, which prevents the contact which fires the fuse. Well, I grab it—so. See, I'm holding the lever down with my hand. Then out comes the pin—so! Now she's ready to throw, Bos, and, when she leaves my hand, the lever goes up, the fuse lights, burns about four seconds while she's traveling through the air and then—bang-o!"

"I see," said the bosun. "Don't drop it, Corp!"

"No fear," was the response. "I'm going west, but not that way."

The corporal replaced the pin and proceeded to take the life out of the bomb again. So ended the bosun's first lesson in grenadiering.

He received his second lesson next day after a friendly wrangle with the corporal over the latter's ability as a bomb-thrower. For the greater part of the previous night the bosun had eagerly listened to the tales the corporal eagerly told of grenading in the trenches—with tales of raid and counter-raid, of squads ranging No Man's Land in dead of night, dropping pineapples and sticks upon Fritz's working parties, of mopping-up expeditions that pierced even to the fourth line trench of Hunland. The bosun found them most satisfying yarns, for they always ended with plenty of good Huns, which were dead Huns; but concerning the remarkable accuracy of the bomb-throwers' aim, which the corporal insisted upon, he was frankly skeptical.

"Sure you can place them, even in the dark," insisted the corporal. "You don't throw by sight, you throw by feel. Not often you see what you're throwing at. Mopping up, now—your bayonet men are ahead, and they call out 'Fifteen yards right' or 'Twenty left,' and you drop one where they say, knowing from your training and practise just how much force to put into the heave. And, if you're throwing from your trench, you've got to keep your head down, or it's napoo pretty quick. The officer has the range down to the inches, and he gives it to you, and you drop them into Fritzie by the feel of the throw. I'll show you tomorrow, out on deck, how it's done, Bo'sun."

"You're not going to 'eave them things about the decks?" demanded the bosun.

"You bet I ain't; I've spent too much time shining them up," said the corporal.

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"But I'll take a lump of coal, or a spud, and show you. A spud—that's about the right size. By George, a few spuds like them we had for dinner would come in handy out there about the time they were yelling 'Ammo up!' They were hard enough to bust even a squarehead!"

THE next morning the bosun reminded the corporal of his promise, and the latter said to come along and he would show he had not been talking through his hat, you bet! They walked aft and then returned forward, the corporal studying the topography of the terrain; then, spying a pot of red lead stowed away beneath number two winch, the corporal seized it and, before the too interested bosun could protest, painted two broad, parallel lines upon the deck, some four feet apart, just before the break of the bridge.

"We'll call this here the enemy trench," explained the corporal.

Next he carefully paced his way up the ladder to the bridge-deck, aft and down the ladder to the after well-deck. Fifty long, stiff-legged paces he measured and stopped.

"I'm a wiz," he modestly reminded the bosun; "so I'll make the range a good fifty yards. We'll call this here our trench." He painted two more lines upon the deck. "Now, you'll admit that I can't see the enemy trench from here?"

The bosun admitted so promptly. The entire length of the bridge-deck, above their heads, intervened between the marks.

"All right; bring on your spuds," said the corporal.

The potato locker was fortunately unlocked and handy by, being just outside the galley door. The corporal chose his ammunition with care, picking out firm, regular-shaped tubers. When he had a hatful, he took up his position in his trench and began to swing his arm to limber it for action.

"Now you go up there where you can see it land," he directed the bosun.

The bosun hurried forward. When he reached the forward edge of the bridge-deck, he saw the second mate, with face and voice uplifted to heaven, standing in the enemy trench, profanely wondering who the 'og was who painted up his deck, and he was going to make the blighter swab it up with his snout when he found him out!

" 'Ere, stand from under, mister!" cried the bosun.

"Here she goes," came the soldier's voice.

"What's this, Bos?" demanded the second mate.

"It's the 'Un trench—and 'ere comes the bomb!" exclaimed the bosun. "Stand clear!"

But the bomb arrived on the words. The bosun's eye caught sight of it high in the air, coming down. The second mate's eye caught sight of it, too—and a second later caught it. The impact of the blow was so shrewd and unexpected that the second mate sat down under it.

"Gorblimme, if you 'ad only been a 'Un and it a real one!" exclaimed the bosun as he reached the fallen man's side. "Fair and square 'it, that was. 'E can certainly 'eave them!"

The second mate was too full for words—that is, reasonable words—for the instant. He sat up and nursed his eye with his cupped hand; then he swore a bit and said he was going to fight the many adjectived blighter what had done it! All the while the bosun was explaining; the second mate finally paused for breath and caught the drift of the explanation. Rage immediately gave way to interest. The corporal, sauntering forward to witness the result of his throw, met the emphatic demand to do it again so the second mate might see how it was done.

The corporal was willing. This sport was meat and drink to him. He threw another potato, which, he asserted, registered fair on the enemy trench parado. He threw again and again, and the marks upon the forward deck were evidence of the horrid execution wrought upon the Hun. Six hits out of ten throws at fifty yards was, the soldier declared, blamed good shooting. His auditors agreed it was.

The bosun and the second mate and the third engineer, who had come on deck to demand what all the bally row was about outside his room, then proceeded to try their separate hands at the game. The corporal embarked them on a course of instruction in the proper technic of the throw; it was not so easy, the trio discovered, the bombs having a habit of flying in any direction save the desired one. Still they progressed while the spuds lasted,

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and, if they didn't hit the enemy trench, the cat, the cook and the two trimmers working the ash-hoist were all bombed into dug-outs, which was exhilarating evidence their aim was improving. The corporal said, if they kept it up, they would land yet; but the scandalized steward said to the captain that three balmy nuts were throwing fresh provisions overboard, which ended the practise abruptly.

The bosun, lying wakeful in his bunk musing upon his dream, thought also of the corporal's graphic illustration of the art of bombing. He had not ceased to marvel over the accuracy with which the corporal had placed those potatoes where he wished without ever seeing the spot aimed at. He had not ceased to thrill over the yarns the corporal had spun of grenadier's work in France and Flanders. Those pineapples kept dancing before the mind's eye of the bosun. Ah, if a bloke could but land a live one beneath that 'atchet-faced fiend and witness the result! That was a finish for the 'Un devil worth contemplating.

Aye, but how? That was what puzzled the bosun—the how of it. That 'Un devil would be popping up on them shortly. Oh, he knew all hands were congratulating themselves on the weather and on being safe out of the zone in a few more hours without even smelling a fish! But he knew better! The bosun knew that, if the fog came down like a blanket, if the whole grand fleet came to draw guard lines about them, still would that 'Un devil pop up on them! He knew! Was not he on board? Was not he that 'Un devil's bait?

Though he didn't want to and fought against it, the bosun found himself living in anticipation the coming tragedy. It would come that day, he felt. Along about dusk, probably; that was the 'Un devil's favorite working hour. The same horrible thing all over for the fourth time!

The bosun could see just what would happen. There would be the surprize—perhaps a glimpse of the U-boat from the bridge, or perhaps a shell dropping on board and exploding, as the first warning. There would be the frenzied work of lowering away the boats under fire, and some of the blokes would get knocked about and to bits. There would be the command to pull alongside the murderer. And then—what?

What happened then would depend upon that 'Un devil's humor. Of course, the skipper would be taken on board the fish as prisoner. This was the moment the bosun dwelt long upon in thought—when he, in the captain's boat, would be alongside the submarine, but a few yards distant from the enemy. When he first comprehended the beauties and uses of pineapples, he thought his problem was solved; he would have the corporal, or he, himself, heave a bomb at this instant when the 'Un devil was within easy range. But reflection said no. The enemy would be within range, true enough, but the U-boat's deck would be peopled by subordinate Huns, armed and on the alert for just such an attempt.

An attempt to throw a bomb beneath those many hostile eyes would be instantly detected, and saluted with a storm of lead. The bosun did not care so much about this as far as he, himself, was concerned; he was really indifferent to his own fate, could he have his vengeance. And, when he thought it over very soberly and carefully, he did not see how it could affect the fate of his shipmates. If they had but the ghost of a chance, it would be different! But he knew what would happen to them in any event—that 'Un devil would slaughter every man-jack. Oh, didn't he know! He, who had thrice gazed upon his mates dying at the 'Un devil's behest!

It was better to die fighting, reasoned the bosun. And there was a chance that the corporal with one of his blessed bombs could blow that 'Un devil to the particular hell the bosun knew was waiting to receive him. What if they were all killed immediately afterward; death was their fate at the 'Un devil's hands, anyway.

It was worth trying. The single chance, indeed, for vengeance. For the bosun well knew his old dream of getting his hands upon the 'Un devil's throat was a hopeless dream. But, if the corporal got into the captain's boat when the ship was abandoned; if he crouched in the boat's bows, say, with his pineapple in his hand and tossed it when they were within a few yards of the devil's fish—for, of course, the 'Un devil would command the captain's boat to come alongside and disembark the skipper—there was an excellent prospect the 'Un devil would murder no more British seamen. An excellent prospect, if—what was it the corporal said about heads?

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If a head was round, the corporal could not get it, but if a head was flat behind the ears, the corporal had that head's number. The bosun wished he had noticed more particularly what the 'Un devil's head was shaped like. He didn't know. He hoped it was flat behind.

Oh, if only the corporal would and could do it. 'Oist the 'Un aloft! The corporal had told him of the terrific force in the explosion of one of those little grenades; it would finish the 'Un devil and any one else who was anywhere near him. The corporal had three of the things. The bosun knew how rapidly he could throw them. Now, supposing everything went hunky-dory, and he landed the first one fairly and followed it up with the other two! Why, they'd not only get the 'Un devil—they'd clear the decks of the dirty swine the 'Un commanded! And then . . . .

SOMETHING exploded in the bosun's brain. He sat up in his bunk, bumping his head and not heeding it.

"My blinkin' heye!" he exclaimed. "Strike me a blushin' pink!"

He sat still a moment, thinking, half dazed by the brilliance of his idea.

"S' 'elp me 'eaven, I 'ave 'im!" he said, slowly. "My heye, I 'ave!"

He tumbled out of his bunk, made certain, with habitual caution, that the port-holes were closely shuttered, then switched on the light. The corporal, dressed as was the bosun for a sudden awakening in the water, was disclosed in the lower bunk sleeping the sleep of an easy conscience. The bosun without compunction seized the other's shoulder and shook him awake.

The corporal opened his eyes and looked up at the bosun with the calm self-possession of a man used and inured to danger.

"Sub?" he asked in a quiet voice.

"No, not yet," said the bosun. "But, oh, Gorblimme, listen to this, Corp! I just thunk up a scheme, I 'ave, for to get that 'Un devil!"

"What?" exclaimed the corporal not quite so quietly. He glanced at his wrist-watch. "You waking me up at three in the morning to talk some more about that blasted pirate? ——! Go back to bed!"

"No—'ere, listen!" pleaded the bosun. "Don't cover your 'ead! I just 'ad a dream, Corp!"

"Just 'ad a dream," echoed the corporal. "And seen a ghost, I suppose?"

"I seen something better 'n that," replied the bosun. "I seen you, Corp, 'eaving a pineapple at that 'Un devil!"

"What's that? Me?" queried the corporal in a more interested voice.

"A sign, I calls it," said the bosun. "For look 'ere—I 'ad this dream, and I woke up on account of the second mate 'aving the wind up proper, and I fell to thinking, and, strike me dead, all at once I 'ad thunk up a scheme! We can get 'im, that 'Un devil, you and me, Corp!"

"Oh, blow your Hun devil!" said the corporal. "I'm sick of him. Why, I thought from the story you handed me over the beer the other night that we'd meet your Hun devil the minute we got out of the river. Here we are three days out, and no sign of him yet. You've lost him this trip, Bo'sun. Better forget about him until you are homeward bound again."

"We 'aven't lost 'im, no fear," asserted the bosun. "We're in the zone yet, and you'll see 'im pretty soon, I say. That's why I roused you out—we got to make our plans without wasting time. 'E'll get us today, Corp! I don't know 'ow I know, but I know. I feel it. 'E'll pop up on us this evening, like as not. That's 'is time. Oh, 'e'll meet us, right enough!"

"Well, he ain't got my number; so you can't worry me," answered the corporal. "I think you're just superstitious with your hunches and dreams and signs and feels. But I'm awake now, so go on with your scheme."

"It's you that'll get 'im," went on the bosun. "Of course, 'is men are likely to get us directly after. But, then, that 'Un devil would get you anyway, Corp, and, as it is, you'll go under knowing you sent the blighter a'ead o' you!"

"You been drowning me ever since we met," complained the soldier. "I tell you, Bosun, unless your Hun has a round head and something to do with the 162nd Bavarians, he can't hurt me. If he's Prussian and flat behind the ears, I got his number!"

"I 'opes as 'ow you're right, lad," said the bosun. "'Owever, we'll get the blighter, and, as for me, I'll die willing then, if so be I must. But it depends on you, Corp! I couldn't do it alone.

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You got to take a chance, you 'ave, and maybe do a bit of fighting against odds. Maybe that's arsking too much—you and your hartificial foot!"

"You say that again, and I'll punch your head!" retorted the corporal in a resentful voice.

"No offense, Corp," the bosun said hurriedly. "I didn't mean it that way. I just meant—well, 'ere, I'll tell you my scheme just like I thunk it up, up there in my bunk."

"Shoot," said the corporal.

The bosun, in a confidential murmur, shot.

III

THE captain, a dozen years gone from his face in a dozen hours, sat in his chart-room and stared at the pin-prick upon a chart and told himself with cheery confidence that he was well out of it; it was a hundred to one shot—aye, a thousand to one shot—he would make his passage safely. He was well out of it! By morning he would be in clean waters; he rather thought he was in clean waters already.

The chief engineer walked whistling from the engine-room hatch to the saloon, rubbing his clean hands with a piece of greasy cotton-waste and nodding affably to the second mate, who stood talking to the steward at the foot of the bridge-ladder. The chief engineer felt that they were well out of it. He also felt that, without throwing any bouquets at himself, he had the right to feel that they were well out of it because of his, the chief engineer's, efforts. It all amounted to having the right man in the right job, thought the chief. The right man gets results. He was getting eighty-three turns out of her this very moment. Not all the tin fish from Hunland could curdle in his mouth the sweet flavor of this achievement.

The second mate told the steward that they were just about well out of it and that he, for one, was jolly glad of it, for now they might draw a human sort of a smile out of that blasted bosun! It got upon a cove's nerves, said the second mate, to be shipmates with a bloke who was certain the worst was going to 'appen next minute. Bos was so sure of his 'Un devil, he had all hands and the second mate, himself, more than half believing in the blighter. Which was bad for discipline, said the second mate, and, if the steward wanted to know his opinion of the bosun, why, Bos was a sad example of a bloke who had been made a bit balmy by 'ardship!

So he was jolly glad they were well out of it, not only for his own skin's sake, but also because the bosun—who was after all a decent sort and a good sailorman—might get over his balminess when he discovered he really could cross the Western Ocean.

With which the second mate knocked the dottle out of his pipe, put the pipe in his pocket and slowly ascended the bridge-ladder to relieve the mate for supper.

But the atmosphere of cheer which seemed to pervade the ship stopped at the door of the bosun's room. Inside this room was an atmosphere of contention. The bosun was apologetic, and the corporal was bitterly discontented.

For the corporal had just concluded a day-long and fruitless vigil, and he felt he had been imposed upon, and he voiced his feeling. A wasted day, and his days meant something to him!

With the dawn, after his conference with the bosun, the corporal had taken a voluntary lookout station just outside the door of the berth. He paced athwartships between the forehatch and the forecastle, his eyes searching the gray placid sea, now to port, now to starboard. He hummed he would wind up the watch on the Rhine and gently exercised his throwing arm.

At no time during the day did the mist come down very thick; at its densest, the corporal could see full half a mile. But he could not see what he looked for. And, as the day wore on, he stopped winding up the watch on the Rhine and commenced to say sarcastic things about and to the bosun. He was saying things to the bosun now.

"Nice lot of rot you stuffed me with last night! Nice scheme you thought up! Got me all worked up about it, didn't you? 'He'll pop up sure; so get ready,' says you. So I get ready and waste a whole day looking for him to pop up! And I might have been lying in my bunk, thinking about home!"

"Now don't get 'eated about it, Corp," pleaded the bosun. "The day ain't ended yet. 'E's likely to pop up any minute, I tell you! 'E likes this time of day, that 'Un devil does, when it's just coming on

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dusk. And, if 'e don't come today, 'e'll come tomorrow. I tell you I got that feeling, Corp!"

"Tomorrow!" exclaimed the corporal. "Well—that is just what I deserve to get for listening to a superstitious bloke! First you say today, and now you say tomorrow, and I suppose tomorrow you will say tomorrow again! You got a feeling, you say? Well, I got a feeling, too. I got a feeling that a bloke that believes in dreams and signs is balmy, and I got another feeling that any bloke that believes in a bloke that believes in signs and dreams is balmy! Tomorrow! Why, the captain says we are well out of it, and the second mate says we are well out of it, and all hands say we are well out of it, and I say so, too! I got a feeling that your Hun devil, and any other Hun devil, is as close as a couple of hundred miles astern and going the other way. So I'm going to unload these Mills, and you can give me back my gun, Bos!"

The corporal lifted the pillow on his bunk and disclosed beneath it the canvas bag containing his grenades and an automatic service pistol. This pistol was one of a brace he possessed; the other one was reposing in the right-hand side pocket of the bosun's trousers.

"Wait till tomorrow," pleaded the bosun.

"No; hand it over," said the corporal firmly.

The bosun slowly drew the weapon from his pocket and balanced it in the palm of his hand.

"Let me keep it, Corp?" he pleaded.

It was at this precise instant that the second mate, ascending the bridge-ladder to the flying bridge to relieve the mate for supper, reached the particular step upon the ladder that raised his eyes a foot above the weather-cloth. By pure chance his gaze happened to be directed over the starboard beam.

Instead of singing out to the mate the words that were in his mouth—"Chow time, mister!"—he sang out that he would be blowed if it wasn't!

The mate, standing gazing into the standard compass, glanced swiftly at his junior and then in the direction the second mate was looking. He said, "Holy smoke!" Then he reached for the whistle-cord.

In the bosun's room the corporal had extended his hand to receive the pistol from the bosun. The hoarse blast of the whistle punctuated the bosun's plea. For an instant the two men stared at each other, motionless, listening to the whistle and racing footsteps upon the iron decks and a strong voice shouting. Then the bosun returned the weapon to his pocket and whispered—

"It's 'im!"

The pair tiptoed to the door.

THE second mate had seen a black hump growing out of the sea when he made his exclamation. The bosun and the corporal, when they reached the deck and stared over the bulwarks into the haze and growing dusk, saw the completed picture. A submarine, fully emerged, was cruising some two thousand yards distant. At the distance and in the evening light she was little more than a dark outline—a smudge, a sinister blot, moving upon the waters, with the sea breaking white over her bows.

The bosun glanced aft. The captain had already reached the bridge and taken charge; he was standing by the engine-room telegraph, erect, silent, gazing at this black Fate which had overtaken him when the eleventh hour was safely past. He raised a hand to check the helmsman. The ship was turning, rounding her stern to the blot out yonder, running away from it. But the bosun knew this was a hopeless effort, even as the captain knew it and all hands knew it. The *Battle Abbey* had no legs that would match a U-boat's legs.

Behind him the watch below came tumbling out of the forecastle, sailors and firemen, pulling on clothes, belting life-preservers, as they ran, their jaws still chewing upon the last mouthful of their forsaken supper. They ran aft swiftly, silently without panic, much as men who had gone through this thing before and were used to it—as, indeed, most of them had and were.

The bosun turned his gaze seaward again. The submarine was over the quarter now and closer. The bosun could distinguish her plainly—a large cruising-type diver with two fixed guns, fore and aft of the conning-tower. He could see the black dots of men about the forward gun. There was no doubt in his mind as to the identity of the enemy.

A pale yellow flame burst from the submarine's forward deck; a shrill whine filled

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the air for the space of a second, terminating in a roar and a shock that made the *Battle Abbey* reel like a drunken man—and a cloud of dust and smoke hovered over the wreck of the steamer's poop.

"That's 'im," stated the bosun with conviction. "'E don't waste 'is torpedoes!"

"Well, if he's a Prussian, I got his number!" asserted the soldier, with equal conviction.

"Then, let's lay aft," said the bosun. "It's the boats, now. There—'e's stopped 'er, the Old Man 'as. It's boats—and remember, Corp, you want to squeeze into my boat, the Old Man's boat! Come on!"

The bosun started aft toward the bridge. The corporal followed more slowly, hobbling along upon his wooden foot, his hands busied with the canvas bag he carried. He drew out his three grenades from the bag and stowed them beneath his life-preserver, against his breast. Just what was to come of the bosun's hunch, the corporal didn't know. But he was prepared to play his part, and he felt his part was likely to be an unpleasant part to those he played against.

He knew what he could do. He knew that, if this Hun of the bosun's had a head that stopped short at the ears, he, the corporal, had his number. He knew that, if the Hun were allied in some mysterious fashion with the 162nd regiment of Bavarians, the Hun had his number. Just fate, and there was no use his worrying himself about it!

The corporal gained the bridge-deck and leaned against the side of the saloon, watching the bustling confusion that was attending the filling and lowering away of the boats. It was an orderly and silent confusion, the only cries being the sharp commands of the officers. But everybody was in a wild hurry, except the corporal. He looked at the captain's boat and told himself he had plenty of time. The Old Man had not yet left the bridge.

The ship was motionless; the black gang from below were already on deck and tumbling into the boats. The submarine was motionless, also. She lay abreast, about a thousand yards distant, a knot of men discernible about her bow gun, other figures being visible passing in and out of her conning-tower. She did not shoot again after her first shot which wrecked the *Battle Abbey's* poop and brought the ship to stop; but there was no doubt about her being prepared to shoot if it were necessary.

"He don't waste his shell, either," muttered the corporal, thinking of the bosun's words. "Now, I wonder—is his head flat behind?"

But he had no answer to this important question—and little time to muse upon it. The captain was calling from the bridge:

"All away there, mister? All away?"

The mate's voice came from overside, from his boat, which was first in the water:

"Number four away, sir! All clear!"

From the other side of the deck came the second mate's voice:

"Number one clear, sir! Lowering away three!"

At which announcement the crackle from the wireless room abruptly ceased, and "Sparks" came bouncing out of his cubby-hole and clambered into number three boat.

"Here, you—Corporal!" called the second mate. "Here's your place!"

The corporal shook his head and waved his hand. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the captain and helmsman coming down from the flying bridge. He stepped to the side, and with the bosun's assistance hoisted his crippled body into the bows of the captain's life-boat.

"It's 'im!" whispered the bosun. "I can spot 'im now, standing by 'is conning-tower!"

"If he's Prussian, I got him!" responded the corporal. "Have your gun ready, Bos!"

A moment later the boat touched the water, and the corporal aided the bow oar to unhook the fall. The bosun and the captain slid down the after fall and took their respective places—the bosun pulling stroke and the captain at the tiller.

They gave way at the word, described an arc and pulled rapidly astern of the deserted steamer. The mate's boat was already several ship-lengths distant in this direction, resting on oars, and the two starboard boats were approaching him. The bosun saw, glancing over his shoulder, that it was plainly a rendezvous the officers had planned for this very event, hoping thus to keep the boats together.

"Captain, it's that 'Un devil!" exclaimed

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the bosun. "Don't bunch the boats—'e'll 'ave a better mark!"

"Nonsense! He'll not shell us; he fired but one round into the ship!" said the chief engineer, who sat by the captain's side.

"Mind your stroke, Bosun!" the captain said sharply. "I'll do the steering!"

"She's coming toward us!" exclaimed the corporal in the bows.

THE submarine was forging slowly toward the boats. Her deck was fairly well peopled—a group about the threatening bow gun, men standing about or coming and going through the conning-tower door, and one figure that stood alone near the conning-tower. These details the men in the boat gathered slowly as the submarine approached and her people became distinct. For each man rowed with his head upon his shoulders and dread in his face—a dread that deepened when the bosun exclaimed again:

"It is 'im! That 'Un devil! Standing alone, there, Captain! Don't you see the long, 'atchet-faced——"

"Stow that!" harshly commanded the captain.

"I know 'im; I know 'is fish," muttered the bosun.

A murmur, half-pleading, half-imprecation, ran along the thwarts. The Spanish fireman who sat beside the bosun commenced to say his prayers. The oars thumped steadily in the oar-locks for a moment, and then abruptly the captain gave the order to cease rowing. The boat lost way and lay motionless, and all hands stared earnestly and fearfully at the approaching menace.

The U-boat was very close to them now. It was cutting in between the captain's boat and the other life-boats. Presently it too lost way and stopped, not two hundred yards distant from the captain's boat. She was big, bigger than he had imagined, mused the corporal in the bows. The bosun had said she was a big one, but he had no idea—she being so low in the water and so indistinct at a little distance—that she was this big. Why, her hull seemed nearly as long as the hull of the old *Battle Abbey*, drifting about abandoned over there. She was an ugly thing, uglier than a tank; her rust-mottled, wet plates had a slimy, reptilian appearance. A disgusting way to fight, reflected the corporal—disgusting, and truly German, this slinking beneath the sea and assassinating honest-looking, upstanding ships.

She was big and well-manned. The corporal counted eight men about the forward gun—a five-inch gun, he judged. A dozen more were visible about the decks. Well-manned, well-armed, alert! The corporal saw three men with rifles in their hands, watching the boat he was in. This scheme of the bosun's was certainly madness—unless. . . .

The corporal gazed earnestly at the tall figure in the white cap that stood alone just outside the conning-tower door.

"If I only had a glass," he wished audibly, "so I could see his head!"

The tall figure suddenly took a few steps forward and sent a hail over the water in clean, clipped English.

"Ahoy—the boat! Is that steamer's master in that life-boat?"

"It's 'im—'is voice!" exclaimed the bosun.

The Spanish fireman broke off a prayer in his mother tongue to swear in English. The men on the thwarts stirred restlessly. The captain sighed heavily and turned his head and stared for an instant at his doomed ship; then he faced the men before him.

"Good-by, lads," he said in a swift undertone. He placed his hand upon the chief engineer's shoulder. "Mr. MacDonald will take command. Join the other boats and keep together if possible. We wirelessed our position—there is a good chance the patrol will pick you up."

He raised his voice and answered the hail.

"Yes, sir; I am the master!"

"Come alongside me!" came the crisp response.

The U-boat's commander spoke a word to the gun-crew, and the latter commenced to train their weapon around to bear over the submarine's farther side in the direction of the other three life-boats.

" 'E's going to shell the boats!" exclaimed the bosun. "The 'atchet-faced swine! Do you see, Corp?"

"I see; I'm ready," said the soldier shortly.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the captain.

" 'E is; 'e's that 'Un devil!" cried the bosun. " 'E'll butcher all 'ands; first the other boats and then us. And 'e'll

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butcher you, Captain, when 'e 'as you safe in 'is fish and pumped dry! 'Ere, sir—and lads, listen! Let's make a fight for it! We can get that beast, even if 'e does get us!"

"Nonsense, Bosun!" interrupted the captain.

"It ain't nonsense; it's Gospel!" asserted the bosun. "We can get 'im, sir! The corporal and me 'ave it all fixed. 'Ere, sir—Corp 'as 'is three pineapples tucked in 'is vest all ready to 'eave, and 'e 'as a gun, and so 'ave I! We pull alongside 'im, and Corp 'eaves 'is bombs, and we board 'im. Corp will blow that 'Un devil to ——, and, if we 'ave luck, we'll get the rest. Corp says we can get 'im proper if 'is 'ead is flat behind!"

The captain's bleak, gray face lighted at the bosun's words. But he shook his head.

"You are crazy, man!" he said. "You must do nothing of the sort! Why, they'll murder every man-jack of you if you show fight!"

" 'E'll murder us, anyway," said the bosun. "I know that 'Un devil! We'll fight if you'll lead us, sir. Eh, lads?"

A responsive growl came from the thwarts.

"Aye, we'll fight," came from amidships, "and use the oars for clubs!"

The Spanish fireman stopped praying a second time and drew his sheath-knife from its sheath.

"Ah, sir—look!" softly exclaimed the chief engineer.

"Good God!" said the captain in a horrified voice.

The U-boat's gun crew were loading. The gun was trained over the diver's port side; trained, the captain knew, though he could not see, upon the three life-boats he had commanded to rendezvous over there. The breech-block of the gun was open; as he looked, a German sailor lifted a shell out of a large wicker basket that was lying upon the deck near the gun, handed it to another man, who shoved it home. A third of the crew swung the breech-block closed. The captain could see a gun-pointer bending to the sights.

The Hun who had hailed them, he of the tall figure and white cap, suddenly flipped his arm carelessly, negligently. In response the gun belched forth a flame and a puff of black smoke, and the ears of the men in the boat were buffeted by the sharp crash of the discharge. The breech-block of the gun swung open again, and slowly, methodically, carelessly, the gun-crew commenced to reload.

"It's a point-blank range!" the captain said in a sick voice.

"Wot did I tell you?" demanded the bosun.

"Fight?" suggested the chief engineer, in a barely audible voice.

"Yes!" said the captain. "Now, men—we can't escape, but we can spoil their aim, perhaps, and aid the other boats. You are willing? Very well. We'll end like British seamen, at any rate. Give way!"

THE oars dipped, and the boat slowly crept forward—a boatful of desperate, furious men, rowing to death and, each one swore, vengeance. The Spanish fireman was praying again—but he rowed with his knife reposing naked upon his knees. The bosun, keeping stroke with one hand, drew the pistol out of his pocket and handed it to the captain.

" E're, sir—take it," he said. "If Corp don't 'oist 'im aloft, I'll use my 'ands on 'im!"

The corporal, balancing himself in the bows, was coolly calculating his chances of " 'oisting 'im aloft." He was by long odds the calmest man in the boat. He did not think anything about the certain death he was approaching. Long ago, while living in the Flanders mud, the corporal had ceased to believe that life or death was man's gift; he discovered that Fate gave life or death, using men as instruments. He, himself, was delegated by Fate to deal out death to men whose heads were straight up and down in the back, to Prussians, and no Prussian vengeance could reach him. But certain Bavarians, whose heads were not quite so square, had his number. The only thing that worried him now was the shape of that 'Un devil's head!

Prussian or no Prussian, he could spoil that gun-crew's aim, reflected the corporal. He growled his curse to accompany the boat's chorus of curses when the explosion of the second round broke against his ears.

"Dirty swine!" he muttered.

But he was not horrified or rendered unduly angry by the sound. He had met

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the Hun in war too often to be upset by any common, garden variety of atrocity, such as shooting at unarmed, defenseless men. But he could spoil their aim! He watched the three men who stood near the conning-tower with rifles in their hands; the trio had not taken their eyes from the approaching boat, and the corporal understood very well they had been assigned to the task of watching for and checking with lead any hostile demonstration. He hoped they would not napper him—if nappered he must be—before he made his throw.

He had his target marked. It was the white patch upon the submarine's deck near the gun, made by the wicker ammunition container. It was a bold bull's-eye against the black background of iron. Not since his training-camp days in England had the corporal had such a fine mark to throw at!

But never had the corporal measured his aim under more adverse conditions. He had thrown grenades when the ground rocked beneath his feet from shell explosions, but he had always felt the earth beneath him, and it felt solid even when quaking. His present foothold seemed to lack substance. The boat rocked to the oars' stroke and lifted to the long, oily swell of the sea, and the corporal felt as if he were standing upon jelly. Yet never had he felt more certain of his aim.

He braced his body against the gunwale, calculating the ever-lessening distance between himself and his target and watching, out of the corners of his eyes, the men with the rifles. It would have to be a long throw; it would not do to wait until he got too close, or they would see what he was up to and topple him over before ever the bomb left his hand.

A hundred yards, he figured. He stealthily drew one of the grenades from his breast and, holding it below the gunwale, drew out the safety-pin. Ninety yards—and the U-boat's gun was discharged for the third time, and the crew proceeded to reload.

An instant later the swell raised the boat upon a crest, and the corporal obtained a glimpse of the submarine's target across the iron deck. Two of the *Battle Abbey's* three boats were visible, oars dipping rapidly as the wretched crews pulled madly in desperate and hopeless effort to escape the fate which had overtaken the third boat. The third boat was gone, obliterated, wiped off the surface of the sea. The corporal saw black specks in the water—the heads of swimming men. He heard the gun-crew laughing.

He heard bitter, low-voiced curses behind him from the stern sheets, where the captain and the chief engineer sat. He himself cursed.

"Dirty swine!"

And suddenly, with a swing of his body and a sweep of his arm, he launched the grenade—and threw himself forward upon the gunwale, his ears saluted with the sharp crash of the musketry as the riflemen discharged their pieces in his direction. The bullets passed over his head; one chipped an oar-blade; another splintered the gunwale at the corporal's left hand, but none found lodgment in flesh.

The corporal's eyes never left his missile. It rose high in a wide curve and fell, hurtling upon its course with all the speed that one hundred and eighty pounds of bone and muscle and hate could give it. The corporal saw the gun-crew and the Hun commander, himself, frozen in their attitudes and staring upward with gaping mouths at this black ball of death falling upon them. They had no time to shout or move. It was a long throw, as long as the corporal had ever made, quite seventy-five yards—but it was the fastest throw he had ever made. He knew his aim was sure. But he feared, as he lay there over the boat edge, that the grenade would explode ere it reached its mark, for he had shortened the fuse in expectation of close-quarter fighting.

Actually, it did explode ere it reached its mark. The black speck the corporal watched was still some half-dozen feet above the heads of the gun-crew, when it suddenly dissolved into a burst of flame. But the report of the explosion never reached his ears.

What occurred occurred in such lightning sequence the eye could not perceive distinctions. The grenade burst in the air; in the same second the ammunition caisson burst upon the deck, with a flare of flame that enveloped the gun and its crew. And then, just as all the air seemed to be withdrawn from surrounding space, leaving him crouching in a vacuum, and just as a giant, invisible hand picked him up bodily

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and flung him backward, the corporal saw a valley appear in the sea beneath the submarine's bow, saw that bow lifting skyward, bursting apart with flame. But he heard nothing, for the immensity of noise had numbed his ear-drums.

He lay upon a body, with another body spilled across his, one of a tangled heap of arms and legs and torsos the terrific concussion had piled into the boat's bottom; and he stared upward at a pillar of smoke that hung high in the air and within which revolved nameless, black objects. He had no more than a glimpse of this when a slaty sea rolled into his vision, curled and dropped upon him. It smothered him and his companions and more than half filled the boat, nearly swamping it.

DAZED and spluttering, the corporal disentangled himself and lifted his head above the gunwale. The column of smoke had disintegrated; a rain of strange character was falling all about the adjacent sea—a large plate of iron missed the boat by inches, sliced the blades off two oars and disappeared hissing beneath the water; a white cap, apparently spotless and uninjured, dropped over the ring-bolt in the boat's bows; something whizzed by the corporal's head and fell into the boat itself. These things happened as he raised his head above the boat's side. But he noticed them unconsciously; he remembered the details afterward, but at the instant his attention was focused upon the greater scene.

Just before him was a hole in the agitated sea, a sucking vortex that made a sobbing noise like a great indrawn breath and clutched and spun slowly about the laden, water-filled boat. The submarine was dropping into this hole; at the very instant the corporal looked, the pirate's stern disappeared from view, and the swirling waters filled the opened grave. A wave broke over the spot. When it had spread and subsided, the corporal stared at a blank expanse of heaving sea.

He crouched there upon his knees, the water swirling about his hips, still half-stunned from shock, filled with awe. He felt no thrill of triumph; that would come later. He felt wonder. His mind was struggling to achieve comprehension, to link together cause and effect. He had hurled his little pineapple! That huge, black monster had blown up and sunk! He was gazing at clean water!

Clean water, indeed. If it had not been for the white cap hanging upon the ring-bolt in the bows, the corporal could have believed there had been no submarine. There was not a bit of wreckage on the surface.

But presently there was oil upon the surface. It came bubbling up from the depths in great quantity; it slid over the water and formed a scummy slime; it was like the muddy life-blood of the evil thing that had been destroyed. And it was destroyed! The corporal knew it when he saw the oil.

"Done in proper; see the oil?" he heard the captain's voice behind him.

The captain's voice seemed to break a spell. The corporal did not turn his head directly, but he became conscious of his companions' presence and voices. He heard the Spanish fireman chattering a plea to the mother of God, the chief engineer saying over and over, "Well, I'll be ——!" and the bosun reiterating an agitated demand, "What 'appened, mates; what 'appened?" The corporal replied to the latter question, quite unconscious that he spoke. "The blighter blew up!" he said.

He noticed the other two boats, lying on oars; the sea was empty of bobbing specks, and the corporal wondered how many of the occupants of the boat the Hun had sunk had been rescued. "Well, the others are safe!" he thought. Then on sudden impulse he half turned his head and gazed at the steamer, drifting idly, deserted. She did not look deserted; the hanging boat falls and the wrecked poop looked odd, but there was a wreath of smoke ascending from the funnel and a wreath of steam about the whistle. The corporal realized with quite a shock that it had really been but a few moments since he had stood on the ship's deck with three bombs in his waistcoat and a hard resolution in his heart.

"Here—shake a leg, men, and get this water out of the boat!" came the captain's voice again in curt, self-possessed accents. "Come now—come out of it! We are nearly flush now; we'll founder presently if we do not bail this water out of her!"

Immediately there was the scrape of metal against wood, and, turning completely about, the corporal saw the Spanish

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fireman just emptying the first bailer-full of water out of the boat. The rest of the men were finding their places upon the thwarts. The captain, himself, was dipping water with his cap.

But the chief engineer was sitting stiffly upright staring at the bosun, and the bosun was sitting stiffly upright staring at the sea. The bosun was exclaiming still in an urgent voice—

"What 'appened, mates?"

"By George, I know!" exclaimed the engineer. "Torpedo—that's it! Let go inside her!"

The remark was a magnet that drew together the corporal's disorganized thoughts. Cause and effect linked up in his mind. Pineapple—caisson—torpedo!

"That's it!" he cried aloud.

"What's it?" demanded the bosun.

"Why, it's as plain as your ruddy nose!" continued the corporal. "Don't you see? Torpedo! That Mills of mine let go just above the caisson, and a fragment touched off one of the shells in the caisson. That's it! And the shells were all nose-down on the deck, and the one that let go just tore through and touched off a torpedo inside the ——thing! That's what happened, sure!"

" 'E's gone! Gorblimme — that 'Un devil!" muttered the bosun.

"He jolly well is," said the corporal. "Oh, it's rich, I say—it wasn't my pine-apple that hoisted the blighter; it was one of his own babies!"

" 'E's gone—and so is my curse," added the bosun.

"Of course," said the corporal. "You never had a curse, you silly old nut! Just superstition."

"Stop that chattering," commanded the captain sharply. "Bail—you men! We must get back to the ship!"

The order brought the bosun to himself with a jerk. He muttered apologetically and snatched his cap from his head and bent to work. The corporal, too, was impressed; the whole boat was now bailing, save only himself. He picked up the white cap from the ring-bolt, glanced at it curiously for an instant, at the stripe of gold braid about the crown, and the double-eagle insignia above the peak, and then commenced to ladle water with it. He was beginning to feel his thrill of triumph.

A hoarse shout of mixed amazement and exultation from the bosun's lips caused him to straighten up again. The bosun was holding something high in the air with one hand, something he had plucked from the water.

" 'Ere—look!" he cried and commenced to laugh hysterically.

The boat, as one man, stared open-mouthed and wordless, transfixed by the sight of the thing in the bosun's hand. It was a human head, a grisly, ghastly-looking thing, bloodless, dripping sea water. The face was unmarred, waxen and hideous with snarling lips.

"It's 'im!" cried the bosun. "It's the 'Un devil! Oh, Lorlumme, see the 'atchet face of 'im!"

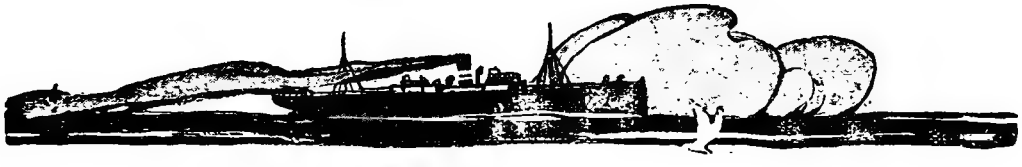
"*Dios!*" exclaimed the Spanish fireman and crossed himself.

"Let's see!" said the corporal.

He made his way aft over the thwarts and took the horrid burden from the bosun's hand. He was the one man in the boat who felt no horror. He regarded the head with calm, professional interest and felt of it.

"Yes, I knew it," he said, nodding. "Flat behind the ears—see! A Prussian. That's how I came to get him. I had his number!"

With which the corporal carelessly tossed the relic into the sea and recommenced his bailing.



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Big Balsam Joe

by

Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "Alias John Doe," "One Lone Man," etc.

IT WAS on the bright morning of a third Sunday in July, and "Big Balsam Joe" Light—who had been given his nickname because of his having come of the ill-starred Lights of Big Balsam Mountain—stood very well hidden among the laurels that grew on the slope that rose to the westward of the little Stony Fork log church. Joe Light was not welcome down there in the meeting-house, and he knew it; people wouldn't have been willing to believe that he had any good intention in going to church.

I think he considered himself really bad, and I can not say that he wasn't really bad; but he had been, God knows, square and clean in his badness. The man was a creature of circumstances. At the age of fourteen he had been left to shift for himself, his relatives having been literally wiped out in an up-hill feud. That he was as wild as a wildcat was, of course, only that which was expected and openly predicted. Also, it was openly predicted that he would some day meet his death by hanging.

Quite naturally Joe Light had taken to the timber-camps, and this, the third Sunday of July, found him both the champion logger and the champion fighter of all the logging country of the Unakas.

The thing that had begun his going to listen unseen to a preacher, however, had not been a desire to hear a preacher preach. It was the everlasting longing for a glimpse—just a glimpse—of one Miss Hattie Murrell, who was easily the prettiest girl he had ever seen, that had started his clandestine Sunday visits to the laurel thicket above the meeting-house. He had known Hattie during the majority of his twenty-four years, and she had known him, too, for that length of time. He secretly adored her, and she was unfailingly kind to him. Unfailingly kind to him also were her parents, a religiously inclined old couple whom the folk thereabouts held second to none save the Almighty Himself, and that in spite of the pure devilish wickedness of their one son.

Robert E. Lee Stonewall Jackson Murrell, aged twenty-two, was a would-be professional card-player whom the men of the neighboring logging outfits called "Jack-Pot," and he was rapidly learning to drink the fieriest of moonshine whisky without even making a grimace over it. The people of the Unaka Mountains were wont to go to any length in order to keep this young man's misdeeds from the knowledge of the much loved Uncle David and Aunt Mary. It would have been nearly as good as a death-warrant for any one of them to have gone to the elder Murrells with the truth. Keeping it from them had become a law—and a law that was not to be broken.

Soon Big Balsam Joe saw Uncle David and Aunt Mary coming without their daughter, coming slowly along the dim mountain trail, walking close beside each other as if in evidence of their perfect devotion. Bent old Mary was in black, even to her sunbonnet; stooped and gray, heavily bearded old David wore clothing

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that was nondescript but neat, and he carried a Bible in his hands. On the lined countenance of each was an almost beatific smile; to them all the universe was good and all was right within it. Joe Light thought of Jack-Pot, and his strong, sunburned face became grave.

It struck him as queer that Hattie wasn't with them, and he turned his gaze backward on the trail. She was nowhere in sight. He crept a little farther down as the mountain healer in the log house below began to read aloud the first four lines of the opening hymn.

Big Balsam Joe was not wholly unaffected by the spirited singing which followed. But he did not hunger after religion; rather, he pined for the sympathetic companionship of human beings, being himself so very human. Then there were footsteps behind him; he turned his head quickly to see Hattie Murrell, and he noted with a swelling throat that she was smiling at him. She wore a freshly laundered dress of percale and shoes and stockings, and there was a neatly tied bow of blue ribbon on her sunny brown hair.

"I knowed I'd be late fo' meetin'," she explained in her musical, native hill drawl, "and I jest lit out through the woods, the nigh way. But—what're you a-doin' here, Joe?"

She ran a sweeping glance over his stalwart, booted and corduroyed, broad-hatted figure. The fresh prettiness of her dazzled Joe Light, half intoxicated him, just as it had done a hundred times before.

"The only bright spot in each one o' my weeks o' life, Hattie," he blurted, "is to come here fo' one sight o' you, fo' because I wuship ye—though I ain't hardly got any right to tell ye that! And," he added awkwardly, "I've got so I sort o' like to hear the sermonts."

She blushed a little and continued to smile at him. It was the first time he had told her that he worshiped her, but she had known it almost from her flapperhood. Apparently she had forgotten that she was late for church. Then her face became so sober as to seem worried, and she took another step toward Big Balsam Joe.

"Mebbe ye've seen Jackson today?" she said, turning her eyes downward.

The hillman frowned and looked off at nothing. He had seen Jack-Pot, and Jack-Pot had been drinking. Hattie suddenly lifted her head somehow desperately.

"Ye needn't to mind a-tellin' me, Joe," said Hattie. "And ye needn't to be afeard I'll tell pap and mother, fo' I shore won't. Ye see, Joe, I know my brother is bad. And I'm a keepin' the secret jest the same as you other people are."

"Yes, I seed him," muttered Joe Light.

"And he was a-drinkin'?"

Big Balsam was strongly tempted to make his answer a falsehood. But somehow he couldn't bring himself to lie to her. even with the reason he had for it.

"A little, Hattie," he admitted.

Hattie caught his arm.

"Listen, Joe," she murmured tremulously, "you watch, and don't ye let Jackson come into the meetin'-house. He hates this preacher, and ef he was to take a fool notion—mebbe he'd do somethin' puffectly awful. He hinted to me he would only this very mornin'. Oh, he shore needs a gyardeen!"

Big Balsam nodded.

"All right. I'll watch, and I won't let him come into the meetin'-house. You go ahead down there, Hattie, fo' because you're done a right smart late now."

She gave him a look of gratitude—and perhaps something more than gratitude—and went on. As she left him, his gaze followed her adoringly, idolatrously.

HALF an hour passed. The preliminary hymns had been sung, and the big-voiced minister was warming up to his text. Joe Light kept one eye on the log church and the other on the dim trail, so to speak. Soon he caught sight of the oncoming, slightly staggering figure of Robert E. Lee Stonewall Jackson Murrell, and he slipped back through the laurels, turned sharply down the mountainside and intercepted the young man within a hundred feet of the church door.

"What's in the air, Jack-Pot?" he wanted to know as he blocked the path squarely. "Trouble?"

"Trouble's my middle name," Murrell clipped boastfully. "That there dawg-gone preacher has been a-tellin' it around 'at I was a shame and scan'al to my folks, and I'm a-goin' to yank him out o' his pull-pit and maul kingdom come out o' his cyarkiss——"

"Ye ain't a-goin' to maul nobody," cut in Joe Light. "The preacher never said

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nothin' but the truth; you shore are a shame and a scan'al to ye folks, and ye ain't a-goin' to make a cheap road carnival o' yeself now ef I can help it. It's a dang pity ye don't take as big a int'rest in a-keepin' ye rotten cussedness from ye good old pap and mother as other people does! Ef you was a boy o' mine, Jack-Pot, I'd cut me a hick'ry withe nine feet long and take dang nigh all the hide offen ye back, and I'd do it right now."

Jack-Pot sneered. One of his hands crept to a hip pocket and to the butt of a bright, short-barreled revolver—the kind that often gets its owner killed.

"You ain't man enough fo' that, Big Balsam!"

Light took another step forward, his face suddenly hard.

"Git ye paw offen that pop-gun, Jack-Pot," he ordered, "or I wisht I may die ef I don't take it from ye and bite it in two and throw both pieces away."

There was a short battle of brown eyes; then Jack-Pot Murrell reddened slightly, drew his hand from his hip pocket and at once produced a pack of cards from one of the pockets of his coat.

"The's a big game to be pulled off over at Grandpap Grigsby's still-house," he said with a weak smile. "'Bud' Lyerly and most o' the Bad Ax outfits'll be there. Bud busted me last night, and I'm a-goin' to win my money back, which same is the big game. Want to go along wi' me, Big Balsam?"

"Play cyards on Sunday fo' money?" Joe Light's eyes narrowed. "I ain't no Christian man, shorely, Jack-Pot, I reckon, but I ain't never been low-down in my meanness. But it's better fo' you to do that 'an to make a howlin' mess o' public wuship and break ye pap and mother's hearts. And, a-seein' 'at ye're bound to —— to do one or t'other, I reckon I'll go wi' ye to Grandpap Grigsby's. Like Hattie says, Jack-Pot, ye shore do need a gyardeen, and I'm willin' to be it."

Young Murrell's face became dark at the mention of his sister's name.

"Hattie," he growled. "What's Hattie to you, Big Balsam?"

"Oh, nothin' much," Joe Light said sternly. "God A'mighty's angel, 'at's all. Well, ef ye're a-goin' to Grandpap Grigsby's hang-out,come on. Ef I cain't do nothin' else, mebbe I can keep ye from a-bitin' and killin' yeself like a snake does when it gits jest so mad."

They made off stealthily through the woods for the big Sunday gambling game, while Uncle David and Aunt Mary and Hattie their daughter and those other faithful folk in the log church listened to their minister's vivid portrayal of the horrors of Hades and the beauties of the Promised Land.

GRANDPAP GRIGSBY was a lone old man, a wicked old man and a very cunning old man. He lived in a big log house on the bank of a creek. In a rock-walled hole under the floor he made corn whisky that he did not disgrace with blue revenue stamps, piping the necessary water from the creek and sending the smoke of the still furnace up his chimney. The worst element of the neighboring logging outfits was accustomed to gather in the big old cabin of nights and on Sundays, and Grandpap Grigsby was making more real money than he had any need of.

When Big Balsam Joe and Jack-Pot arrived, it was past noontime. The place was alive with booted and broad-hatted, corduroyed and blue-shirted timberjacks from Upper and Lower Bad Ax Creeks, Crooked Creek and Pistol Creek. These men hailed the champion fighter and his wayward companion hilariously and offered whisky by the pint, quart and jugful—all of which Light declined forcibly for both himself and Jack-Pot.

Murrell immediately sat in a game with Bud Lyerly, the Upper Bad Ax sharp. Joe Light took a rickety home-made chair in a near-by corner of the log-walled room and watched with his keen eyes wide open. Jack-pot put up stakes recklessly—and as recklessly lost from the beginning. Soon Light began to wonder how Murrell had come by the sizeable stakes he was so steadily losing. But that was scarcely any affair of his; so he said nothing until Jack-Pot had lost four hundred dollars to Lyerly and sat back, white-faced, his pockets empty.

Then he caught Hattie's brother by an arm, fairly lifted him from his chair and led him outside. Murrell was so nervous that his talk was shaky. When they had reached a point at which they couldn't possibly be overheard, Light gripped Jack-Pot's arm in a painful grip and spoke.

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"Ye'll tell me the truth, honey, I know," he said softly, his voice almost paternal in its deep and kindly interest. "A man's case is hopeful, don't matter how bad he is, as long as he ab-so-lutely will not lie, which same is my hope fo' you, honey. Now, Jack-Pot, where did ye git that fo' hunderd dollars ye lost?"

The face that Murrell lifted to the anxious, questioning eyes of Big Balsam Joe was a wretched face. It was as if he had but that moment realized the enormity of the thing which he had done.

"Won't—won't ye never tell, Big Balsam?"

"May I drap dead when I do. I promise. Out with it, Jack-Pot."

"It—it was pa-pap's," Jack-Pot chuttered, seeming now little less than terror-stricken. "He'd worked and worked and saved and saved to git it, and he meant it fo' Hattie and me when we married. He kept—kept it in a old broke vase a-settin' on the top o' the cawner cubbard in the dinin'-room, and I—I took it after they'd gone to meetin'!"

Joe Light dropped his hand from the other's arm in a way that whispered of the fear of contamination. To one of his stamp theft of any kind was not much better than outright murder; but this—for a man to steal money half of which was intended for him—for a man to steal the love that was already his . . . .

"While ye pap and mother was at meetin', a-listenin' to the Gawspel o' the Lord—Jack-Pot, ye copperhead snake!"

Murrell shrank at Big Balsam's denunciation. Then he tried to take hold of himself.

"Ef you'd loan me a stake," he said suddenly, clutching at a mere straw of hope, "mebbe I could win it back. Pap never looks at his money, nor even thinks about it, on Sunday, and he'd never know it. He— Say, Balsam, you quit a-lookin' at me thataway!"

Light didn't seem to hear. He continued to stare, without really being aware of it, that wilting, withering, shriveling stare. The silence became heavy, and finally Murrell shrugged his shoulders and laughed a somehow awkward laugh of abandon.

"Aw, ye needn't to make so much of it," he said. "I don't keer. I don't keer fo' nothin' nohow, Big Balsam!"

"'I—don't—keer,'" repeated Joe Light slowly, scathingly. "Jack-Pot, I'm no religious man or no Christian man, but I'm here to tell ye the Gawspel truth: 'I—don't—keer' is wrote in big red letters on the fust sign-board on the shortest and quickest road to hell. I'm a-givin' it to ye straight, as shore as ye're knee-high to a grasshopper, Jack-Pot."

And then he bent his head—this man who was an outcast among good people—and lost himself in thought of things which both puzzled him sorely and cruelly tortured him.

When he looked up again, he was alone. Jack-Pot Murrell had disappeared completely. Big Balsam Joe went back to Grandpap Grigsby's cabin, but Jack-Pot was not there. For a moment Light stood barely inside the door with his eyes riveted on the Upper Bad Ax sharp. Then he strode forward, his step firm and his brown eyes steely and narrow, and put a hand on Bud Lyerly's shoulder.

"Finish that quick, Bud," he said with a snap. "Fo' because you and me's got a game to play."

Silence fell upon players and onlookers alike. They stared at the strapping young mountaineer in mild wonderment. Lyerly grinned a trifle uneasily.

"I thought you never played cyards on Sunday, Balsam?" croaked old Grandpap Grigsby from his near-by chair.

"I hain't, never afore, and most likely I never will ag'in. Howsomever, I'm a-playin' today. Hurry up, Bud."

Lyerly's countenance had become a little whitish.

"Oh," he said, "it's Jack-Pot; hey? I played him fair, Balsam."

"That ye did, shore," agreed Joe Light; "fo' because I watched to see 'at ye did. And I'll play you fair, too, Bud."

Soon the game was closed, the table cleared and a new pack of cards opened. Only big Balsam and Bud Lyerly sat in. A cut gave Light the deal, and he shuffled and dealt with an awkwardness that amused the expert Lyerly. Big Balsam bluffed with two small pairs and won the pot. It was lucky that he did, for more than half of his forty dollars was in it. But Joe Light knew better than to depend on a bluff the next time; he deliberately set himself to keep Lyerly disconcerted with the boring of his eyes—a thing that to him

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was not unfair—and he succeeded in one measure or in another. Bud Lyerly made no attempt to cheat, because he feared being caught at it by Big Balsam Joe.

The hours went on, with the winnings leaning steadily toward Joe Light. Then Light realized that he would have to win faster if he was to get old David Murrell's savings back in time; no small run of luck, of course, would hold out forever. He became desperate enough to resort to anything short of downright murder or theft. The soul of him unconsciously began to cry out to the Ruler of Destinies, whom he knew so little, whom Uncle David and Aunt Mary knew so well and trusted so deeply.

"Gi' me a hand!" was the cry, had it been put in words. "Gi' me a plum' killin' hand, and let Bud Lyerly have one might' nigh it as big!"

The sun went down; the onlookers pressed closer and closer. Soon Grandpap Grigsby lighted the oil lamp that swung from the rafters directly over the card table.

It had been Lyerly's deal, and, as he picked up his five cards, Joe Light read tiny signs of great triumph on his face. Light picked up his own five cards, and he found them the ace, king, queen and jack of clubs with the trey of hearts—lacking but one card of being an ace-high straight flush, best of hands! Lyerly opened, and Joe Light, praying in his heart that he might draw the ten of clubs, stayed in. When the one card fell from the pack, Big Balsam picked it up as if carelessly. And he frowned when he saw it, a thing which Bud Lyerly was quick to notice. The betting began; it went up and up until the greatest stakes that had ever been on Grandpap Grigsby's table lay between Light and the Upper Bad Ax man.

When Bud Lyerly put his hand face-upward on the table, the breathless onlookers saw that he held an ace-high straight.

"Beat that, Balsam!" Lyerly cried.

"All right," replied Big Balsam Joe, his smile grim. "Jest cast ye lovin' eyes on this here, Bud."

His five cards went to the table face-upward. They made an ace-high straight flush; he had drawn the ten of clubs! Perhaps it was merely chance. And then, perhaps the Big Friend of Uncle David and Aunt Mary Murrell had heard his soul's despairing, wordless cry for help. Who can say?

Joe Light calmly made sure that he had old Murrell's four hundred, together with his own lone forty, safe in his pocket; he gave the remainder back to the astounded Bud Lyerly, handling it as if it were steeped in putrefaction. The crowd of onlookers now pressed forward still more; to them it was strange that an amateur could put over one like that on the Upper Bad Ax man. They began to slap Big Balsam on the shoulders in hearty congratulation, and at the same time they jibed at Lyerly mercilessly.

"Why it was or how it come, I shore cain't see," declared Grandpap Grigsby. "It must ha' been what they calls 'beginners' luck'!"

Joe Light shook his head. He went toward the door. When he had reached it, he turned to those who watched him in mingled wonderment and admiration.

"Ye've got to win," said he, "when ye plays God A'mighty's hand. I played God A'mighty's hand today, boys. Any of ye want to gi' me the hoss-laff? Ef so, come right across with it, and I'll paste ye faces to the back o' ye necks. Do ye unnerstand?"

Silence fell over the roisterers. Big Balsam Joe ran his eyes quickly over them. He went into a holster that hung in his left armpit and came back with a blue revolver, which he held out in the flat of his right hand and with the back of his left hand tapped lightly.

"Boys," his voice came gravely, threateningly, "the next one o' ye what plays cyards wi' Jack-Pot Murrell or gives or sells him whisky—or even puts it where he can find it—sh'll reckon wi' me. I'm a-givin' it to ye straight, and this includes you, Grandpap Grigsby."

The old moonshiner flared up at once.

"What right ha' you got to say who I sh'll sell to and who I shain't?"

"The right o' the law, by ——!" Joe Light answered in tones that were as hard as iron. "Which same is me. I say I am the law; when you sell or give Jack-Pot another single dang drap o' whisky, I'll close this here place up. I know ye'd ruther sell to who ye like, but we cain't allus have our ruthers. I've done said my say. Do ye git it?"

His open challenge drew nothing in the

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shape of a reply. He backed out of the cabin, closed the door behind him, holstered his revolver and set out at a rapid walk for the rambling log cabin home of David and Mary Murrell, beloved of heaven and earth.

NIGHT had fallen long before he reached it. However, a light shining through the front window of the best room, and the soft glow of a pipe on the honeysuckle-covered front porch told him that the Murrells had not yet gone to bed. He opened the creaking split-paling gate, gave a friendly word to the dog that ran out to meet him and walked up the rain-guttered, marigold-bordered path. As he put a foot on the step, old David rose from his chair on the porch to greet him.

"Welcome, welcome," the patriarch said in his kindly way. "I jest cain't see nigh as well as I used to. Is this—" Then, suddenly, "Is this you, Jackson?"

"No, Unc' David," drawled pitying Big Balsam Joe. "It's me, Joe Light, Unc' David. Ain't Jackson here?"

"Not yit," answered David Murrell.

He was not worried, evidently. He did not know of the theft of his money, of course, since he never harbored even a thought of money matters on the Sabbath. And his son's absence gave him little cause for uneasiness—boys would be boys!

"Take a cheer and set down, Joe," he invited.

Light dropped into a convenient chair.

"Purty weather we're a-havin'," he said pleasantly, though inwardly he was desperately wondering what had become of Jack-Pot. He had to find Jack-Pot to give him back the money he had stolen, in order that it might be returned to the broken vase in the dining-room before morning.

"It shore is," the old hillman replied. "Today was the finest day fo' goin' to meetin' 'at I ever seed. The preacher, he shore preached a good sermont this mornin'. And last Sunday he preached the best sermont I've ever heerd. 'And now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity'—that was what he preached about. I wisht ye could ha' heerd it, Joe! Say, Joe, why'n't ye never go to meetin' none?"

Light had heard the faith, hope and charity sermon, but he did not choose to say so now.

"Well, Unc' David," he muttered, "I—I'm afeard I'd sp'ile it for most o' other folks; they wouldn't hardly want to set in the same house wi' me, ye know, a-thinkin' I'm so low-down."

David Murrell hung his gray head and combed his gray beard with his knotty fingers. He knew that Light had but spoken the truth, and he wished he knew of some comforting thing to say to him.

"Them folks," he finally replied, "ain't got human charity. They've got faith and hope, but they ain't got human charity. Pore weak worms o' the dust a-settin' theirselves up as better'n other pore weak worms o' the dust! I don't say it in anger, Joe, ye unnerstand; I only say it out o' pity. Joe, pore boy, I know; I know. Ye ain't never had a fair chanst. Ye had to bring yeself up. Ef ye'll go wi' me to meetin' next Sunday, Joe, I'll be plum' glad to go wi' ye. Ye can walk right up in front wi' Mary and me, and ye can set atween us. Me and Mary, the Lord's handmaiden that she is, we hain't afeard we'll be dirtied by a-settin' clost to ye, bless ye soul! You unnerstand, I ain't no rip-roarin', snortin', tooth-gnashin' Christian, and I don't want to see you be one. The kind o' Christianity what saves a man's all is the kind what lets him look the Master in the eye on his death-bed and say, 'Lord, I done the best I could wi' what Ye gi' me to do with; I been straight, and I been charitable wi' the little I had.'

"Ef that ticket don't git ye through the pearly gates, son," he went on, "ye couldn't be rammed down a cannon's throat and shot through. Now won't ye go wi' me and Mary to meetin' next Sunday, Joe?"

Though he had not realized it, his voice had fairly throbbed with commiseration, and Big Balsam Joe Light was of that fine texture of human clay to which commiseration is poison, a thing not to be borne. Big Balsam went to his feet uncertainly. Somehow he was clean down to the bottom of his heart. For the first time in his twenty-four wild years his feelings had the best of him, and he was glad that it was dark there on the vine-hung porch. He groped for old David's hand, found it and gripped it hard. Then he turned blindly and went slowly toward the gate, walking as a man whose feet are on ground that he never trod before.

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That which brought him back to himself was the presence of a slender, barefooted young woman. She had emerged with the suddenness of a spirit from the laurels to the left of the winding road. Halting squarely before him, she turned her face upward in the bright starlight, and he saw that it was Hattie Murrell.

"Joe," she whispered, "where's Jackson?"

He met her question with another—

"Hain't he been back home?"

"I ain't seed him sence he left this mornin'. Don't ye know where he is, Joe? Hain't ye got no idee?"

Big Balsam merely shook his head. For a long minute the two of them stood there and said nothing to each other. Then the girl spoke again.

"Joe," she murmured, and it came with some difficulty, "ef ye can find a way to straighten Jackson up, I'll—ye said ye wushiped me—ye can have me! Because, ef pap and mother finds out about Jackson, I'm afeard it'll simply kill 'em both dead."

Joe Light bent toward her. He took her fine young shoulders lightly in his strong, fighting hands.

"Hattie," said he softly, "ef I could do that, I shore wouldn't ax no pay fo' a-doin' it. A-bein' what I am—bad and looked down on by 'most everybody—I couldn't never ax ye to marry me, nohow, though to live out my life wi' you would be all I could ax on earth. But—but I'd give a lot to know ye like me, Hattie! Do ye?"

He dropped his hands from her shoulders, and her hands began to creep slowly up his arms. She raised herself to her bare tiptoes, and held her face temptingly close to his. It was answer enough. He did just what any other man like him would have done under those same circumstances; he kissed her quite reverently. Then she slipped away in the starlight, and soon the laurels had swallowed up her slender form.

Big Balsam didn't move for five minutes after she left him standing there in his paradise in the lonesome mountain road. He might have given her the stolen money to put back in its place, but he didn't want even her to know about it; it would have cut her all up, surely. He would wait for her scapegrace brother to return, and he would give him a spirited little iron-clad lecturing that might possibly have some good effect.

He waited and watched near the home of the Murrells until midnight, and still Jack-Pot had not come back. Then he decided upon a method of procedure that was more or less foolish, maybe; he himself would steal into old David's log-walled dining-room and put the money into the broken vase on the top shelf of the corner cupboard. Cautiously he crossed the split-paling fence, renewed his acquaintance with the good-natured dog, dropped to his hands and knees and went creeping silently toward the one window of the dining-room.

The window was fastened down, but Joe Light easily threw the catch with the big blade of his knife. After listening for a moment and hearing nothing whatever, he stole soundlessly across the sill, placing his feet carefully on the worn floor. It was the task of but a few seconds to locate the old cupboard—but just as he reached for his pocket and the four hundred dollars, the door leading to David Murrell's bedroom opened wide, and there stood David Murrell with a lighted lamp held high in one hand. In the other he held an old-fashioned cap-and-ball Navy revolver at a ready.

"Who is it?" he barked. The unpardonable sin of burglary had put him quite beyond himself.

Being a person of impulse, Big Balsam Joe sprang for the open window. Murrell, being also a person of impulse, fired at that same instant, the sputter and roar of the old weapon bringing quick cries of alarm from Hattie and her mother. Joe Light staggered under the shock of the heavy leaden bullet, which struck him in a shoulder and spun him a quarter of the way around and showed his face plainly to the angry old hillman.

His brain in a hopeless muddle, he started once more for the window, and David Murrell did not fire again; perhaps he was now too much amazed to fire again. Joe Light got both feet on the windowsill and leaped. But one of his boot soles caught on a nail, and he fell head foremost.

His head struck a stone there in the cabin yard, and he lay still, crumpled like a wet rag. The good-natured dog ran up, whining somehow tragically, licked his ashen face and lay down beside him. It was a tribute to him—and a worthy tribute.

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BIG BALSAM JOE, outcast, looked up a few minutes later and saw first the blooming and fragrant honeysuckles that walled in the front porch of the Murrells' cabin. The tiny, long-fingered flowers were like golden wax in the yellow light of a lamp that had been put on an outside shelf. He lay on his back on the floor, where he had been placed by the neighbors who had come immediately upon hearing old David's revolver shot and the frightened cries of his wife and daughter..

Then his gaze fell upon half a dozen lanky and bearded mountaineers, all of whom held rifles in their hands. They were standing in a group around David Murrell, who seemed to be holding them by the magic of his now somewhat fierce old eyes. Hattie, her mother and a few other women stood near-by; evidently they, too, were waiting almost breathlessly to hear what the patriarch had to say.

Joe Light, also, found himself waiting for the words that were soon to drop from Murrell's lips. They came slowly, solemnly:

"Men, listen to me. Greater 'an faith, greater 'an hope, the Good Book says, is charity. Fo' anybody to come into my house and steal the savin's o' my old days, which same I worked hard to git fo' my son and daughter when they married—and we know Joe Light done it, fo' because we found the money in his pocket—is hard, mighty hard. But that makes the charity all the greater. Men, we're a-goin' to let Joe Light go. We ain't a-goin' to have him arrested, nor we ain't a-goin' to punish him ourselves. That's all I got to say, and I shore mean every word of it."

From the throats of the armed hillmen came rumbles of disapproval. But this soon died out, and their fiery eyes were turned upon the man on the porch floor. Big Balsam stood that very well, and he returned their staring with admirable fearlessness. But, when he saw that Hattie was looking fixedly toward him, looking dumbly, dazedly, as if she could never understand—the Hattie who had suffered him to kiss her, which was proof undeniable that she cared for him. . . .

A few words would explain, of course. The wounded man shut his teeth together tightly, as if it would help him to hold back the explanation. Truly, the finest of "these three" is charity.

Suddenly he realized that Hattie was slipping, barefooted, across the floor toward him. He watched her, fascinated, tempted yet more to clear himself. Amid a silence like that of the tomb, she knelt beside him and looked searchingly down into his face. One of her hands swept his tangled hair gently back from his forehead; she held that hand up to the lamplight, and saw that it was red from the blood of his head wound, but it seemed to affect her not in the least.

"Please tell me," she murmured sorrowfully, "what made ye do it?"

For fear that he would blurt the truth, Light struggled to his feet, sent one hard glance of defiance toward the mountaineers who stood around David Murrell and dove through the wall of honeysuckle vines and into the night. It was very dark now, for a storm was brewing thickly in the west. There came the intermittent flashes of distant lightning and the ominous growlings of distant thunder. The wind that blew upon his face was almost cold. He had left his hat behind, but that didn't matter. Nothing mattered very much now.

For an hour he threaded the dark woodland, going in a fairly direct course solely because of his unerring woodsman's instinct, before the rain came; when it came, though it fell in torrents, he barely noticed it. His solace was that of a martyr; by keeping the secret through the bitter ordeal that lay just behind him, he figured, he had saved the happiness of the three whom he loved best of all the earth's people. For, surely, this would be enough to cure Jack-Pot of his wickedness forever. There had to be something of manhood in Jack-Pot, because he was a son of David and Mary Murrell and a brother to Hattie.

Big Balsam Joe had set his feet in the path of sacrifice, and he resolved to keep to that path. It were better, he told himself, that he go out of their lives completely and be seen in his old home country no more. Accordingly he fought against the pain of his wounds and kept his rain-streaked face toward the blackened west while the small hours of the night drew on.

He had struck a trail that led from Grandpap Grigsby's Creek to the Upper Bad Ax when he overtook the staggering figure of a half-drowned man of about his own age and size. It was Bud Lyerly,

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the drifter, the gambler, and he was drunk. Light caught him by an arm and shook him.

"Don't ye try to cross Bad Ax tonight!" he shouted above the roar of the wind and rain. "She gits up quick, and, when she gits up, she's shore bad and danged bad. She'd drownd ye in a minute!"

"'S that you, Balsam?" Lyerly said thickly. "You—you got my money. You—you cheated me, and now ye want to rob me! You can go to——!"

He was fumbling for a weapon, and the other knew it. Big Balsam shoved him to one side and himself plunged onward.

"Ef ye want to cross Bad Ax," he yelled back, "you cross it!"

Bud Lyerly hurled volleys of abuse after him. Joe Light had no word of reply; he struggled on through the dark wilderness with his face still set resolutely toward the blackened west.

But, had he known of all that came to pass on that memorable night in the Unakas, he wouldn't have gone.

JACK-POT MURRELL reached home shortly after Big Balsam's disappearance. It was the coming rain, perhaps, that drove him in. He was haggard, and, being a son of David and Mary Murrell, he was conscience-stricken. His nerves were much the worse from the poison of Grandpap Grigsby's moonshine whisky. The neighbors had left, but there was still a light in the best room. Jack-Pot, wondering, walked soundlessly in and found his father and his mother and Hattie sitting around the home-made center table, on which burned a big glass-bowled lamp.

None of them noticed Jack-Pot's entrance. Then old David took his hands from a pile of bank-notes and silver that lay on the table and went suddenly to his feet, his bearded face showing both wonderment and surprize.

"Here's five twenties in paper!" he exclaimed, his voice hoarse and shaken. "Mary, Hattie, I—I never had no twenties in paper money! What does it mean, Mary? Could I ha' been wrong? And Joe's done gone off. Mary, honey, tell me what I must do!"

At that instant Hattie turned her head and saw her white-faced brother standing just inside the doorway.

"Jackson!" she cried. Maybe some tiny suspicion concerning the true answer to the riddle of the mysterious twenties had entered her quick mind, for there was an accusing note in her voice. "Jackson! Pap found Joe Light in the dinin'-room, and he shot him—and Joe had pap's fo' hunderd dollars in his pocket! Joe come to, but he wouldn't say nothin'. Bill Nave and them all wanted to hang him, but pap wouldn't let 'em. And now Joe's gone!"

In spite of herself she went to pieces. She fell to her knees and buried her face in her mother's lap and wept and wept because of her love for Big Balsam Joe. It shook Jackson Murrell's soul. It was the final straw that broke the backbone of his waywardness. Straight to his father he went, and he walked like a son of his father and said straightforwardly:

"It was me! I stole that money! I lost it a-playin' cyards on Sunday. Joe Light seed me, and I told him where I got it. And he said, when I'd told him, 'Jackson, ye copperhead snake!' I am a copperhead snake, and, ef the's anything low-downer'n that in the world, that's what I am. Joe, he must ha' lit in and won that money back, and he must ha' been here to put it in the vase when you shot him! That's the truth, pap and mother. What blame is mine, I'll take."

Mary Murrell sat back weakly in her chair, aghast at the news. Hattie straightened, there on her knees; she put an arm tenderly around the old woman's shoulders and gathered the limp gray head to her breast. So far old David had said never a word. His face was a clean white. The impossible had happened. His brightest hope had been dashed and shattered, and the keen disappointment threatened to unseat his reason.

Then he put outward and upward his gaunt arms as if to receive something in them, and he seemed to be staring at some far-off thing that was not for the eyes of the others to see. His lips moved stiffly, and that which he cried out in his grief blanched the cheeks of the three who heard it:

"'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died fo' thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!'"

It was tragic, and it was pitiful. Jackson Murrell sank to the floor in a heap. He was cured.

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AFTER more than ten months of wandering through the mountains of Kentucky and Virginia, of going restlessly from one logging-camp to another, Joe Light became at last unable to resist longer the gnawing temptation to steal back to the country of the Unakas for one more glimpse of it and of Hattie—just one more glimpse, which, he worked out in his fallible human reasoning, would last him for the rest of his ill-starred life. There was no harm in it, of course. He could both go and come back without being seen, he was sure; and, if he were seen, what difference could it make? He was his own man.

It was on the bright morning of the first Sunday in June. The great hills were covered with seas upon seas of waxen white laurel bloom, golden-yellow wild honeysuckles and pink-eyed ivy blossoms; the woods were otherwise sweet with the rippling songs of the rioting thrushes. Big Balsam Joe was headed for the thicket on the slope above the Stony Fork log church, where he meant to hide himself and watch as he had done so many times before. But he approached from a different direction on this occasion, and he found himself standing at the edge of the old Stony Fork burying-ground. Before him rose, in more or less orderly array, dozens of crudely-lettered slabs of sandstone, which had been riven as they were needed from the low line of sandstone cliffs beyond.

And then he saw that which brought a lump to his throat and caused his eyes to open wide and stare hard. On a huge brown slab, by far the greatest of all those sad brown slabs, which marked a mound that was smothered under shocks and sheafs of dead Decoration Day flowers of the fairest kinds those everlasting hills could bear, his own epitaph had been crudely chiseled in this fashion:

HERE LIES
BIG BALSAM JOE
HE WAS A CHRISTIAN MAN

AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM

It was then he knew that Jackson Murrell had confessed and that he, Big Balsam Joe, had been exonerated and lifted to, or even above, the plane on which ordinary respectable people dwelled. The gravestone, that was a mystery; but he didn't bother himself very much about it at that moment.

A burst of song fell upon his ears, and he went toward the meeting-house. But he didn't go to hide himself in the laurel thicket as he had meant to do; instead, he strode into the church and down the aisle between the well-filled, home-made benches. The singing ceased abruptly, and every face was turned toward him; they watched him as if he were a ghost and not a man in the flesh.

It was Hattie who broke the spell. She rose from her place beside her regenerated brother, and her countenance seemed glorified.

"Joe!" cried Hattie. "We thought ye was dead!"

"Well, I thank goodness now 'at I ain't!" smiled Joe Light. "How come it ye thought I was dead, Hattie?"

The other Murrells and the rest of that amazed congregation now went to their feet. Old David hurried to grasp Big Balsam's hand; his wife and their two grown-up children followed suit, and so did all those other people. It was quite the best religious service the Stony Fork meeting-house ever had. Then David Murrell explained:

"Somebody seed you, that night, a-goin' towards Bad Ax Creek, which was a-roarin' full and a-washin' might' nigh everything away. The rain had quit, and the moon had rose, and day was a-breakin', besides, when they seed you—or thought they did. They said you never paid any attention to 'em when they spoke. But we had no idee you'd got drownded until a month after that when we found the mashed up body of a man in a pool away down Bad Ax Creek. His feechers was gone, but he was about yore size; he had on the strings o' clo'es like them you allus wore. And, sence we hadn't been able to find you nowhere, we jest natchelly thought it must be you, Joe."

"It must ha' been Bud Lyerly," said Big Balsam.

The appearance or disappearance of Lyerly, the drifter, never gave ground for surprize.

The minister asked his flock to be seated, and his flock sat down. Then the minister announced his preliminary sermon prayer, and the congregation knelt—a mere bending forward or inclining of heads wouldn't do

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with that preacher; they had to put at least one knee on the floor.

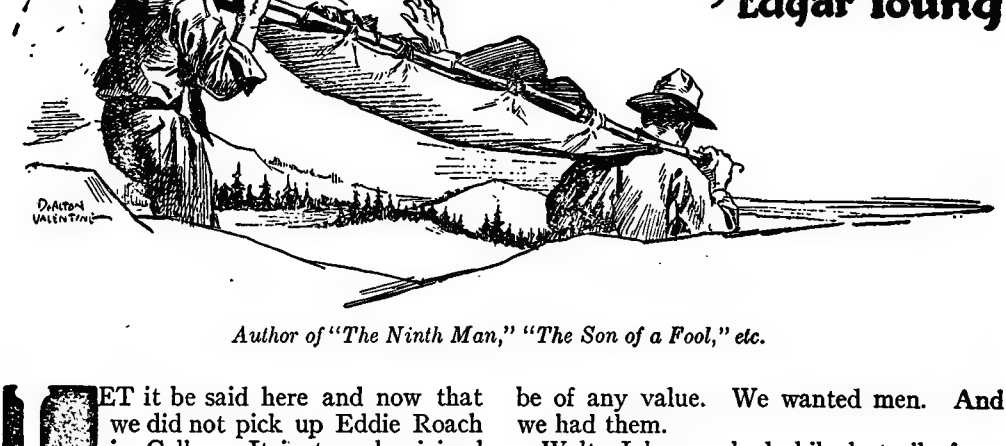
Hattie Murrell and Big Balsam knelt together at the very front bench, between Uncle David and Aunt Mary. Hattie, half forgetting where she was, slyly whispered to the strapping young man at her side:

"Do ye still want me, Joe?"

For the moment Big Balsam entirely forgot his surroundings—and who can find it in his heart to blame the man? He answered in a voice audible for yards around him—

"More'n anything else on God's green earth!"

But nobody laughed. And not many of his hearers wondered what he meant.



Converging Trails

by Edgar Young

Author of "The Ninth Man," "The Son of a Fool," etc.

LET it be said here and now that we did not pick up Eddie Roach in Callao. It is true he joined our expedition there. He was combing the beach—and had been for some time when we landed. But he wished himself upon us. He picked us up. He hung to us like a sick kitten to a hot rock. And, as he was stranded and spoke our own twang of English, none of us had the heart to bawl him out and chase him as we, perhaps, should have done at the very beginning.

Our party of eight consisted of men who had hit trails in every country under the sun and were veterans of veterans. We had eliminated dozens who had wanted to come. A photographer in Panama, as we passed through there, had offered us twenty-five hundred dollars cash and his part of the outfit just to be allowed to come with us. A New York paper had cabled us an offer if we would wait for one of their correspondents. We didn't want them. We didn't want their money. Where we were going, they nor their money would be of any value. We wanted men. And we had them.

Walt Johnson had hiked trail from Nogales to Punta Arenas. Lon Hart and Tom James were old Alaska bindle stiffs who had mushed dogs and thawed drinking water in gold-pans far into the arctic circle. Lew Kelly was an artist who had lived in garrets in the Latin Quarter of New York for twelve years trying to get his own type of art over with art editors who had been promoted from the packing department. Never once had he painted a girl head or swerved from his ideals.

The other four had been pals of mine at one time or other, and out of dozens of chance partners these four had checked up true blue to my notions. Eugene Rodin and "Barnsy" you've heard of. Jim Flood and "Red" Bettles were the same type. All in all, it was a party who would charge hell with one pail of water. If there was any yellow streak in any of us, we would ride it down and sell our lives cheaply just to prove it didn't exist. Our ethics called for that. It was the spirit that bound us

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together. If I boast, forgive me, for I boast of things that are regarded lightly by men who spend their lives by warm fires and in soft places.

And Eddie Roach. Eddie Roach was a joke of a man. He was down and out and whipped. He had lost his nerve. He was on the rocks and had quit trying to get up. There wasn't any fight left in him. And we, who boasted of nerve and fighting to the last gasp, pitied him far more than if he had been a physical cripple. And not a man of us voiced it, even among ourselves. We felt bad about it. I, for one, would much rather have seen Eddie Roach dead than being as low-down as he was.

He had on the little straw hat, sandals and garb of a *cholo* when we saw him first, with linen pants and cotton shirt worn on the outside of them like a Chinese coolie. And dirty? You can imagine what he looked like after sleeping for weeks in them on the dirt floor of peon huts or on the beach like an animal. He was filthy, for he had been drunk most of the time on cheap native rum, bought with pennies he had panhandled from foreign tourists. Not only was he as low-down as a *cholo*. He was a hundred times worse. He was worse than a decent animal. And he had worn the broad strap of native sandals between his great toe and the others until that toe spread far out from his foot like a prehensile thumb.

He drifted up to us when we were getting our outfit ashore from the rowboat that had brought us from the ship to the wharf in Callao. He was the worst, by far, of several ragged specimens that stood about watching us. The only reason I came to notice him at all was that I had a wary eye out for one of them sneaking away with something. We didn't have a thing we didn't need. And we needed each and everything we had, for we had spent time on eliminating unessentials. We didn't want to take a chance on going short on salt or anything else that was worth ten times its weight in gold away from civilization.

He kept edging up, and that's how I came to notice him particularly. I intended knocking him for a goal if he made a pass for anything.

Little drawn-up shrimp with scraggly iron-gray beard on his face, yoke-necked, watery blue eyes, quaking in every nerve from a *pisco* drunk he'd been on for weeks. Dirt? It was caked on his face and neck. Would it be disgusting if I say he stunk with an animal stench like that coming from a lion's cage in Bronx Park? That's how low-down he was. He was as low-down as he could get. Men get pretty bad in the States. But the bottom isn't near so far down as it is in the tropics.

We were sitting on our boxes and bags, discussing ways and means from there back into the Andes. He kept edging up after the others had drifted away. He was grinning, for all the world like a 'possum. Walt Johnson tossed a half *sol* to him, and he scooped it up in a hand that was as skinny and black and untended as that of a monkey. And he turned and ran, a little hobbling trot of a run, across to a grass-covered *cantina* to fill his hide with *pisco*. I forget now whether *pisco* is distilled cactus-juice or not; at any rate, it's worse than Mexican *tequila*, which is. It would drag a god from his throne and wallow him in the mire in short order, for it paralyzes the nerves and strikes brain and morals dumb. It's hell's broth, two hundred per cent. proof. It's worse than opium, morphine or cocaine. And it affects a white man ten times worse than it does a native, who has been brought up on it—and God knows it takes them down the line fast enough. American booze is mother's milk compared to it.

And we never knew he was an American until he came back—and come back he did in short order, after gulping down many glasses of the fiery liquor. It put some nerve in him, for a time, for he blew right up and began talking to us. He told us how glad he'd been to hear us talking English together. And we knew he had been glad from the way he had acted, looking back at it.

Lots of English beach-combers try to cultivate the Yankee twang when an American tourist hits town, but never yet has one succeeded in fooling anybody. This fellow spoke a good quality of United States, and his grammar was much better than any of us were capable of. It made us so ashamed for him that we just sat there digging in the sand with the toes of our shoes and not looking straight at him. Not that we were sentimental. It seems the farther you get away from your own country the better you feel towards your own countrymen. Law of supply and demand, maybe.

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FINALLY Lon Hart took the bull by the horns and asked him if he knew where there was a *peluqueria* and bath-house where we could all get cleaned up and get a hair-cut and shave. We'd all had a bath the Saturday before, and it was only Wednesday, and we didn't need one. But we knew what Lon was driving at, and we all took right in with the idea.

Eddie Roach had been "on the block" there in Callao for several months and knew where there were such things—even if he never had used them—and offered to show us where it was or do anything else he could for us. He was good-hearted enough, all right.

And it wasn't for the few little pieces of change there was in it for him, either. I guess he felt kind of like a stray dog that had found some one that didn't kick him. He showed us where we could leave our luggage in the baggage-room of the depot and told the *mozo* to take good care of it.

On the way up Eddie Roach trotted ahead of us, looking back now and then to see if we were following. We passed the word around and arranged to split on the cost of an outfit of clothes for him and, when we pass a native dry-goods store, we stop and hail Eddie to come back and go in with us. He's right put out when he hears our intentions, and he says he don't want to see us spend that much on him, for imported clothes are high, and, if it's just the same to us, he will take half the money in cash that it would cost.

We know he's thinking of the amount of *pisco* he can purchase with the money, and we just forced him to give us the sizes of the clothes he wears. We buy a full outfit, khaki suit, shirt, shoes, socks and underwear and a human hat, bearing the name of one John B. Stetson of world-wide fame. And we rent him a booth in the bath-house along with the rest of us and tell him to go to it.

He tried to duck out of his booth a time or two, but we had been primed for just such a move and pushed him gently but firmly back and told him to give himself a good one. Finally he got into the spirit of the thing and went to it in there with a vengeance. The water from the showers was warm as milk, but he was shivering like a leaf when he came out at last, and we allowed him to stay out. And red? He was as red as a beet from head to foot where he'd been rubbing himself.

We got him into his shoes and pants and undershirt and took him into the *peluqueria* part of the establishment and got him shaved and quarter of a yard of matted hair chopped off by one of the barbers—his face massaged, some tonic put on his hair, and all the other fixings that a barber can suggest to give him a human appearance. Then we take him back and put his soft shirt on and tie his tie and make him lace up his shoes and put his hat on. Then we stand back and look at our handiwork.

We've succeeded some. God, who made him, and the *pisco* he'd drunk were responsible for what we failed on. He was better in the sight of our eyes and the sense of our nostrils, but he lacked that which each of us gloried in—that quality of being a man. Eddie Roach sagged in his chair and grinned at us with a sickly little smile. His face was weak, awfully weak, loose-lipped, sloping-chinned and shifty-eyed when one looked suddenly at him; not the look of guilt but the look of a cowed spirit that does not dare stare back and assert its rights.

We were a big burly crew of men, heavy on the neck, barrel-bellied, in direct opposition to the wasp-waisted athlete of fiction, and hard of muscle and feature. William S. Hart was about the prevalent type of beauty. Any one of the party, including Kelly, the artist, would have felt as much at home in a lion's den as in a drawing-room. The previous eight months Kelly had lived on the stuff that made Sunny Jim smile, with an Irish stew every two weeks to keep him from having the scurvy. No, he wasn't in Alaska. He was in Greenwich Village, New York City.

Kelly reckoned to me in a whisper that it was the weakest specimen of humanity he'd seen in his life. And Roach was. He was a human rabbit. His face, shorn of the beard, was yellow and wrinkled like a dried prune. There wasn't an ounce of resistance in his whole frame. He was a joke of a man even with the good clothes we'd put on him.

But none of us laughed at him. We could see that he hadn't been born the man that we were. He was under a handicap. Nature had loaded the dice against him and sent him forth into the world a physical and moral weakling. He had been carrying

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weight in the race we had all entered. It was not up to us to feel pride when we looked at him, but to feel a pity which we could neither analyze nor express.

And he stuck with us all that day in Callao, sneaking away now and then to throw a few glasses of *pisco* into him. That night we hired a couple of adjoining rooms in a native *pención* and got an extra cot for him to sleep on. He raved all night in his sleep and cried and groaned and talked out loud. Now and then one of us would get up and light the candle and smoke a cigaret and allow that it was a shame to see good American blood dragged so low in the dust. From snatches of his talk we pieced together that he had been prosperous at one time and his wife hadn't been square. He kept that to himself when he was awake, and one of us would go over and punch him and make him stop when he got to talking things he shouldn't. But even at that we got a pretty good line on him.

The next morning he was at the *pisco* bright and early. The half *sol*—fifty-cent piece—that Walt Johnson had given him would buy a half gallon of the stuff, by the glass. And some of the others of us had slipped him a piece of change on the sly. When breakfast time came, he didn't want anything to eat but went out and stayed until we had finished. He came back right merry with the amount of liquor he'd consumed. That made us feel bad.

There wasn't a prohibitionist in the party. We drank and did not drink when we felt like it, drank too much sometimes and then stopped altogether for a while. We could handle the stuff. And we knew, in spite of maudlin sentiments of long-haired men and short-haired women professional prohibitionists, who got their own booze by express back home and slipped in the back door of saloons, that some men drank quantities of booze from early manhood to extreme old age without any ill effect. But Eddie Roach wasn't this kind of a man. He was a weakling.

And Eddie Roach went with us. He cost us money. He made extra worry and trouble for us. But we couldn't shake him. And none of us felt like bawling him out. A man that could have bawled Eddie Roach out under the circumstances we were placed in would have kicked a miserable dog that came up and wagged its tail at him. Though we made several half-hearted attempts to duck away from him in Callao and Lima, where we went by trolley, he was tickled to death when he found us. I guess the worst we treated him was a whole lot better than he'd been used to, for the natives of these countries romp on a white man when he hits the mat.

Anyhow, he tried his darndest to please. Just a little hint of something we wanted or some information about roads or trails, and he was off on his shambling little trot to do it. This may sound as if he was half-witted. That wasn't what was the trouble with him. He had good sense. He had a better education than any of us. He was old enough to father most of us. It was the *pisco* that had done the work. If the truth must be told, he was a trifle rum-dum and nutty from it. And our bunch hated the idea of throwing him down. It's pretty raw stuff to throw a fellow countryman down in a foreign land, anyway.

So we took him with us. We shelled out and bought nine tickets instead of eight for Lima to Arroya and from there to Cerro de Pasco, although it strained our supply of cash to do it. And at Cerro we chipped in and bought heavy underwear, boots and a sweater for him from the commissary of the mining company. Looking back at it, I think he must have come to some decision or other when he first saw us. I think he knew that the jig was up with him if he didn't get away from the *pisco*, and he knew that sooner or later we would be where there wasn't any.

Not that you'd notice that he was getting away from it this far on the trip. About all the baggage he carried was a demijohn full of the stuff. And he sure did go to it. He couldn't have known whether he was walking or riding all the way from Lima "up the hill."

We had headaches and *seroche* from the high altitude reached by the train. It was somewhere in the neighborhood of sixteen thousand feet at Ticlio. But Eddie Roach was so full of *pisco* that he didn't even know that he'd come up the mountain. Maybe that was his way of keeping up his nerve.

WHEN we got to Cerro, hiking south by east and leaving the regular post-road to our left, Eddie was humming a maudlin song and waving his demijohn at the crowd of miners that

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gathered to see us off. We were traveling heavy. The packs run about a hundred and twenty pounds each. And he, with the booze in him, kept up nicely the first day. He wasn't packing a thing but the *demijuana*, but he was anxious to pack something and kept ding-donging at us all day to let him help. His heart was sure in the right place, booze-fighter or not. And, drunk as he was, he insisted on trying his hand at warming up the boiled beans we had prepared in Lima—for boiling water isn't very hot in the high altitude—and did cook the supper and made a fair job of it.

When we saw that he did not intend to be a drag on the outfit, we felt pretty good towards him. He knew that he would be. He never had hiked a trail in his life. If he had been a trail hiker, he never would have stayed on the beach in Callao for over a couple of days. He would have hiked clear to Rio de Janeiro if necessary. Oh, that trip has been hiked several times, and I know the men that's hiked it. You didn't read about it in the illustrated monthlies, either.

Eddie Roach faunched and tossed all night in his sleep and babbled of everything under creation. Not that he bothered us much. We were too tired for that and only heard him now and then when we woke up to turn over or punch up the fire. The next morning he had a shaking spell and reeled all around and couldn't eat a bite of breakfast until he had downed a cupful of his liquor. Lew Kelly had an idea; he copped the demijohn and tied it on his pack when we were breaking camp and told Eddie Roach he would ration it out to him three times a day. Well, Eddie set right down and cried about it. Cry? You'd think his heart was broke. We all told him to brace up—that it wasn't very long until noon—and he quit crying and put out with us. We knew he wouldn't quit us as long as that demijohn held out. And along about ten o'clock he was stumbling around like a horse with the blind staggers. Lew gave him about a quarter of a cupful, and that steadied him down.

At noon he got some more. Lew was stingy with the *pisco*. He had made himself guardian of it, and he doled it out in ever decreasing doses. And Eddie got shakier and shakier and begged harder and harder for more. Every one knew that there wasn't enough liquor in that demijohn to one-tenth of the way taper him off from the long jag he'd been on, and we were all dreading the time when it should run out altogether.

It did run out on the fourth day, the best that Lew could do. And we had a wild man on our hands. Wild? He was crazy as a bess-bug, after six hours without the stuff. I had the can of alcohol we'd brought along, and at last, when I couldn't stand it any longer, I got that out and sweetened up half a cupful and added some water and let Eddie have that. That brought him around. And I dosed it out to him that way until it was gone.

That was six days after we had left Cerro de Pasco. We had been doing about thirty miles a day. That *pisco* had walked Eddie right along with us. Pretty soon he would have to travel by himself. As I said, he hadn't been packing a pound and we were laboring under heavy packs; further, we were soft and hadn't yet gotten our backs calloused and our muscles hard for the trail. All in all, he had done wonderful. And then came the day that every available drop of alcohol had been consumed. A patent snake-bite remedy from Lon Hart's pack had held Eddie over until noon of the seventh day.

Early in the afternoon Eddie began tearing about and raving and falling to the ground. Suffer? That man went through the tortures of Hades. He finally got a little relief by chewing up a big handful of strong tobacco and swallowing it; but that finally nauseated him, and we pitched camp early.

We had a wild night that night. We were afraid for all of us to go to sleep at once, although there was no danger from animals or bad Indians, for fear that Eddie would run amuck with a machete or belt-ax and make a finish of us. So we took turns sitting on him and holding him down. He wasn't quiet for two seconds at a time. He had an extreme case of the jimmies and from his talk was seeing everything that crawled and squirmed in creation and out of it. When I was sitting on him, he made a wild pass at something and raised a pumpknot on the side of my head as large as a walnut. I felt like taking a club and braining him, and at the same time I felt so sorry for him that I could have cried.

He got no better fast, and by morning

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we tied him with a pack-rope to a stake we drove in the ground and held a consultation on what to do with him. Finally Red Bettles picked him up and carried him up the stream we had camped on until he came to a deep pool. We were above the snow-line, and it was colder than Greenland, but Red stripped Eddie and, tying the rope under his arms, tossed him into the icy water. Eddie screamed until the hills echoed with his shouts, but Red kept dragging him to the shore and repeating the process for fully fifteen minutes.

Then he brought him out and laid him on a blanket. He got us to help him, and we thumped and rubbed Roach in a fashion that would either put his blood to circulating or kill him. There wasn't a square inch of him that wasn't thumped, rubbed and massaged. Then we dressed him and brought him back and made a bed for him. He slept for about an hour and then began having them again. We repeated the process in the stream. During the afternoon we worked on him this way four times. That night he reared and charged all night, but we bore with him until morning.

Next day it was the same thing over again. We lost three days with him, and when we had got him so he could toddle along the trail behind us, he got sick. We had to lay up four days waiting for him to get well. When he did come out of his little sick spell, he was very weak and could scarcely keep up with us, but he was more rational than he had ever been before. He must have been sore from head to heels from the thumpings and rubbings we had given him. His feet were sore, and he was hobbling more than ever.

I don't suppose a poorer-looking specimen of humanity ever put out on a trail than he was. Once, when we paused, he asked how far back it was to Cerro, and we magnified the distance to make it appear three or four times as far as it was. He didn't say any more about it after that.

And for the next three weeks I don't suppose there ever was a man that went through more torture than Eddie Roach did. We hit the trail from early until late, with a short pause in the middle of the day for lunch and a foot soaking. There's many a time I would have suggested taking it easier than we did so as to give Eddie a chance, but I was afraid my meaning would be misunderstood. I had saddle sores on my back as large as goose eggs, from my pack; my feet were a mass of hard, dry sores that scabbed and festered and would not heal and often caused me to bow my head and bite clear through a fold of my coat to keep from crying out loud with the pain when we first broke camp My leaders and joints were grinding and cracking as if they had sand in them.

When we spoke, it was with a smile and a jest, but we didn't speak much. There was no path or road. We were cross-cutting all the tributaries of the Marañon and Madeira Rivers at right-angles. The going was along steep mountainsides, broken by cañons. We were always either going down into or coming up out of a cañon, it seemed, fording a stream or crawling along the brink of a cliff. There wasn't very much timber. We were, at the time, just above the timber-line and just below the snow-line. Some days it was all we could do amongst us to gather enough moss and lichens to make our fires with.

THE trail was mauling us to a finish. And, just to show that we were standing it good, we used to vie with each other in being good to Eddie Roach. I've laid down my pack on the bank of some roaring ice-cold torrent and packed Eddie to the other side when I wouldn't have done it for a thousand dollars in cash. You see, he wasn't one of us, in a way. He was a kind of pariah and an outcast.

But he had our good-will, I'm saying that. He was more like a mascot than a pal. And we sympathized with him when he cried and doctored him up a whole lot more than we did ourselves. When he tuckered out altogether and fell sprawling, we pitched camp. And right glad we were to do so, many's the time!

Nerve? He didn't have a chemical trace of one. A three-foot gulch looked like a Colorado Cañon to Eddie. He was peering around for bad Indians before we got out of the Quichua country, and they're the ones that wouldn't harm a fly. If a stick snapped, he would bob up a foot in the air. He saw and heard prowling animals at night when our lookout on guard never heard a sound. He used to roll out of his own blanket and come piling in with

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one of us in the middle of the night, shivering like an aspen from some fear that had struck him, and lay there sniveling.

And he was awfully ashamed of himself. He told us a dozen times a day that he wasn't fit to be Condor bait. Times when he played out, he begged us to put a bullet in him and junk him. He knew what he ought to do, but he wasn't capable of it. He used to sit by, listening at us talking by the camp-fire, his eyes shining like beads.

We talked big about men we had known, big big men and big little men, for nerve was the yardstick we measured by. And I've noticed, myself, that Eddie seemed to try to do better after hearing one of these talks. When we've stripped off our shoes, I've seen him stand and watch to see if our feet were as sore as his, and I've seen him stare at the saddle sores when we stripped our shirts off and bathed them with cold water to keep down the swelling. And I've seen him thinking and trying to figure it out.

At that, I guess the physical handicap he was carrying was as large as the big packs we staggered under. He was about half paralyzed, and he traveled as if his hip joints had grown together solid. He couldn't seem to raise his feet good and often fell down in trying to clear something only a few inches high.

Finally he hit bed-rock. He showed every yellow trait in him, and he had a million. His body had been tortured until no further torture could be inflicted. Then he began picking up. His face began to fill out and get a better color. His appetite got O. K., and he slept good at night. A good deal of the pity we had felt for him left us, and we began passing the wink around when he didn't do his part of the camp work. He didn't let anything be said before he had pitched right in and began doing his bit. He asked for a pack and, when we resented it aloud, he started making one from the cook-pots and loose impedimenta.

I'll say we all felt different for Eddie right there. That night he went around and hefted the packs and allowed he should pack in proportion to his size, and he got us to help him figure out the *pro rata* on his weight of a hundred and twenty and ours of two hundred and over. Seeing that he's set in his ideas, we all donate a few pounds to him and show him how to put up a man's pack in a blanket and sling it in a pair of overalls to pack by. We all get up and shake hands with him and tell him he's a good pal and not to try and overdo things—that we understand how it is. He just grinned and reared up and looks right proud over that. Guess that's the best he's felt on the whole trip, and a few minutes later he's humming a little snatch of song to himself when he's pottering around over his pack.

But I'm saying he didn't get to be a man all of a sudden like that. He didn't have it in him. But we used to take everything into consideration and give him a whole lot of credit when he did as good as—or just a little better than—he ought to under the circumstances. You see, we'd gotten used to him being a yellow rotter and were expecting him to be one. The best we had ever intended to do was to get him away off out there where he couldn't get any booze and postpone his death until he got back to where it was. When just a little bit of a manly trait would crop up in him, we sure would take on over it and blow him up about it right to his face. And he used to grin and feel right proud, I'm saying, when we did. And his body began to get all right, and his joints limbered up, and he got to taking a man's stride along the trail. He trims him out a little goatee of a beard and clips his mustache and he's beginning to look pretty nifty for an old bird.

Along about this time he whets up his pocket-knife on his shoe, and, when he gets it so it will snip a hair, he allows he's going to give us a little professional attention. It comes out he's been a doctor back in Bullitt County, Kentucky, when he was at himself, but up to this time his nerve had been so shaky he's been afraid to try his hand. He lances our saddle galls and gives us a little first aid treatment.

Hurt? I slipped off a few rods from the camp and rolled on the ground. Yes, sir; rolled like a horse and gritted my teeth to keep from screaming. And he gives our feet and his own a working over. We've all got corns, bunions and ingrowing toe-nails, and he sure did have to do some slashing. I'll say it helped us a whole lot afterwards, but we had to lay in camp for a week before we could travel at all when he got through with us.

The idea of him having been a doctor back in the States, where a doctor amounts

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to something, and then beginning to get his nerve back, raised him in our estimation several hitches. Now and then one of us would call him "Doc" instead of "Eddie," and right dignified he would look for a few minutes afterwards. He was just teetering along between being our mascot and being our pal when something happened.

We've been striking for the country laying on the eastern slope of the Andes, just below Bolivia and just above the Gran Chaco of Argentine, and prospecting our way along. The Spaniards had collected seventeen million in gold in one haul when they captured old Atahualpa at Cuzco. And those Inca fellows had been eating from plates and dishes of pure gold. We've some of us done some poking around the west slope of the mountains before and haven't found very good indications.

But, when "Cabron" Brown arrives in Quito with a sack of nuggets the size of pound pats of butter, every trail hitter and tropical prospector that hears about it is trying to pick the location of the bonanza. To make sure, we had been cutting across the tributaries of all the rivers that head up in this side. I'll say we had our eyes peeled as we went along, and many's the pan of gravel we panned in the course of a day. We've been striking good placer ground at many places but not the big strike we know is over in this country. And Eddie—or Doc—he's been snatching up every little piece of rock that shows a shiny spot and come running to one of us, thinking he's found a piece of high grade. And he ain't helping any. We've got a bunch that can tell gold ore as far as they can see, and he's just pestering us; but we let on he's helping us a whole lot. You see, we ain't made a real bona-fide pal out of him yet.

Well, we gets into the bad Indian country at last. Coming in from Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentine or Brazil, you'll always strike a country several thousand square miles in extent that the Indians won't let you enter. If you even look at one of the thumb-nail sketches of these countries that you find up here, you'll find no towns marked, and I'm saying that not a tenth of the rivers are even shown.

Well, this country is the land of Indians that eat human flesh and cut your head off and hang it up to dry until it gets hard and dry as a bone. They're called by several names. They call them Jiveros back in Peru and Ecuador, and the Brazilians call them Mangeromas. But, whatever you call them, they are pure and simple Billy be Damned. Walt Johnson allowed they were the Incas that had sour-balled and gone back in there after the deal they got from old Pizarro back in the days of the conquest.

At any rate, they are just the reverse of those Inca fellows who were tame enough to eat out of your hand. And they come a-tearing in to fight, blood raw. Doc's got his eyes right out on the stems from fright, but he's doing all he can to keep from showing it—which is about the condition we're all in.

He's come to be kind of a camp tender when we go out prospecting, and we're not traveling so fast as we have been. Many's the time I've seen him trembling in his boots when he sees the bunch of us put out and leave him there to potter around the camp and have our meal cooked when we get back. When one of us would make as if to stay with him, he would laugh louder than he felt like doing and tell us he didn't mind. And he could sling together a pretty fair meal from the game we brought in.

One day we camped right under a high cliff right on the edge of the jungle. We've been drifting gradually down the mountainside, catty-cornering all the way, and that jungle don't look very good to any of us. The eight of us sets out in the morning, aiming to prospect several square miles of country. We put out up the mountain, each one by himself and putting off in different directions—but all going *up* the mountain. Along about ten o'clock, I reckon it was, I had found some colors and some little rough pieces of gold that hadn't traveled far, when I got to wondering about how Doc was making out.

I suppose I was five miles above the camp, and it kept drumming through my head that it was pretty tough on the little old fellow all there by himself. I'll tell the truth, I wouldn't have relished the idea much by myself right on the edge of that forest. For we'd seen the little pine-needle fires that the Indians had been building the day before and felt pretty sure that they'd spotted us.

So I thinks of the cliff and puts back for

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the top of it at a dog-trot. We're all packing our Winchesters and Marlins out to prospect, but we've been leaving our six-guns there at the camp. They, as well as everything else we had in the world—including several hundred dollars worth of dust we've been picking up in searching around for bigger stuff—are there. But it isn't the junk we've got in the camp that made me go back. I felt kind of guilty about us leaving Doc there all to himself, and I wanted to take a look down and see how he's coming on.

When I gets back to the top of the cliff, I run on to all the rest of the bunch. They've wandered back with the same idea I've got, and they're sitting there gassing and joking. Eddie's away down below. The air's clear as crystal, and he don't look much bigger than a doll, but I can see him plain, pottering around the camp. It hasn't occurred to him at all that we're up there watching him. I sets down by the side of the rest of them, allowing to take a short rest, and then the bunch of us begin to climb down.

We can see Eddie every now and then leave off work and stare into the jungles and then go on pottering at what he's doing. We know just about how he's feeling, and we're laughing at him but feeling a right smart sorry for him at the same time. I put it up to the boys that we make different arrangements in the future so as not to put so much of a strain on him. They all agree, and we're just on the point of getting up and starting down when Eddie gives a quick look into the jungle, and tears out and runs about a hundred yards like a scared coyote.

Run? He just flew. We're just cackling and laughing. Lon Hart allows that Eddie must have seen a ground-squirrel or something just as vicious coming out of the forest. We're watching him and ain't seeing then what did come out of the woods. Eddie stops and stands there looking back, and then we see. Every man levels his gun and begins taking aim and calculating the drop and the range. It's not an easy matter to shoot down and out at such a distance.

THEY'RE pawing over our stuff and packing it together, and we're bobbing around with the guns to catch a bead on them, when Eddie quits standing there and starts running again. Run? He was just flying. But he wasn't running away. Not this time. He was tearing back into the camp. He's run and forgot to snatch a six-gun, and I guess it wouldn't have been much use to him, seeing as how he didn't know how to use one. But that didn't faze him. He grabbed up a club from the ground, and, before you could say Jack Robinson, he's back and mauling into those Jiveros like a house afire. There's a good dozen of them, and they're all bobbing about, and the entire kit and boiling of them a howling at the top of their lungs. We try to shout to Eddie to get away, but he don't hear us at all.

And the Indians didn't, either, for that matter. Then we starts scrambling down the face of the cliff taking a chance and our lives in our hands at every leap. When we do get within running distance, we see that he's floored two, and the rest of them are jumping up and down on top of him. It's a good thing he's down, in a way, for we can get a chance to shoot. We fires three volleys into them as fast as we could pump the levers, and we made a clean killing of the entire bunch with the exception of the two that Eddie's brained. And then we rush in and drag them off and drag Eddie out. Beat up? He's been hit with clubs from head to heels.

Well, sir, our bunch was sure cut up about Eddie being in the shape he was. Every last one of us was batting our eyes and talking gruff to keep from blubbering. Tom James, who is a rough bird if there ever was one, started bawling and had to walk off to one side until he got through. Then we get settled down and pack the Indians off to one side out of the way and give Eddie a feeling over for broken bones. I guess that's about all he is. There don't seem to be any whole ones in his body. He's breathing, though, and that makes us feel much better. Some one suggests putting straight up into Bolivia, which, although we've traveled kitty-cornering for over twelve hundred miles, is only about four hundred miles above us, due west.

We slash a couple of poles and sling a blanket to them and put Eddie in. We leave everything, not even taking time to get up a bunch of grub for the trip. We're intending to travel fast and light. Four of us grabs the stretcher we've made, and

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we start. That leaves four to take it turn about.

Pardner, I've traveled some hard trips and some fast ones. I've put to the brush in Mazatlan and traveled ahead of the *rurales* in Mexico clear to the U. S. border. And I went some. My dogs went under the ice with my outfit on the upper Yukon, and I made the run on snow-shoes into Siwash Landing with ice breaking up behind me, for a hundred and forty miles. I've seen our side lose in a revolution in Central America, and I've taken the trail on a minute's notice. But I never hit the pace we hit up those Andes into Bolivia.

That trip was a man-killer. Night came, and nobody said rest or sleep. Morning came, and we were hitting the grit in a fashion fast and furious, swinging upward and passing the stretcher. Our burden was unconscious. And well he might be, for tenderness was out of the question. It was a case of get him to a surgeon and get him there quick. We didn't walk up the mountain. We ran up. We jumped up. We swung up like monkeys. We threw our guns away—and our belts. We lightened down to the last ounce.

Each man did his utmost and shouted to the others to come on with theirs. Men stumbled and fell and hung over the brink of a cliff with one hand or the clutch of a knee. But always the team-work of the party sent the stretcher upward and upward and upward. Near the top of the mountain the *seroche*, the high altitude sea-sickness, seized us, and we bled from nose and mouth and ears. But we flung the blood from our faces and gave new spurts as a dare to the others.

We gained the level plateau on top, which stretched on and on to the tin mines, broken here and there with sharp gulches and rough stretches. And then we began to make time. We ate the distance in a swinging trot, four men carrying and four running by the side to grab hold when the others grew weary. You don't think a man could run all day, do you? Try it and find out. We ran four days and nights. I'll swear that I slept running at a trot. I know I gabbled as I ran and lost track of things. But, if I stumbled and fell and lay there, there was a hand on my collar and a quick yank and an oath bawled in my ear to get up and get to it. I did that now and then to the others, also. It was the team-work that won.

We finally saw a town ahead. There were smoke-stacks and larger buildings than if it had been a Quichua village. It seemed awfully near when we first saw it, but it seemed as if we never would get there. A crowd of Americans spied us as we got near and ran out to meet us. I remember them running out, and then I don't remember anything else for quite a time, for they had to lug the whole bunch of us in from there. We'd all gone down and out with the strain.

It's a couple of days later that I wake up in a strange bed and ask a couple of roughnecks how's Eddie making out. They say they don't know, except that he's up in the hospital and that they're doing what they can for him. Well, I mosey out when I am able and get with the rest of our boys. Eddie's up in the hospital, and they let us in to see him. He's still unconscious, and they have him bundled up with bandages from one end to the other. The surgeon says he has had to do about all he knew how to in the way of operations, and he thinks he will be able to pull Eddie through. We tell him that Eddie's a surgeon himself, and then he says he'll fix him up as good as new if there is such a thing possible.

It's another week before Eddie is so he can tell who we are when we go in. We tell him just how the thing went after he went down and out, but we don't say much about how hard a trip we had to make to get him there in time. We sure brag on him for trying to stop those Indians from getting off with our outfits and tell him they are all safe. He reckons we will have to make another trip back in there when he's O. K.

As soon as he gets to setting up, we decide to give him a surprize. He's earned it. We smuggle a quart of *pisco* in for him and slip it to him under cover. He watches until the doctor is out of sight before he pulls out the cork. He smells of it and grins. Then he smells of it again and grins some more. And then do you know what he did? He hobbles over to the window and slings it as far as he can outside. And we all just know he's going back with us when he gets entirely well. I'm saying none of us would have gone without him.

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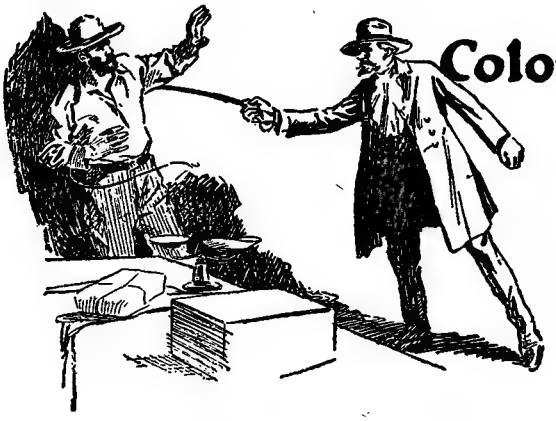

Colonel Sutherland Intervenes

by Gordon Young

Author of "The Good Loser Wins," "The Mask of the Iron Face," etc.

THE auction tent was filled with miners. In San Francisco in '49 auctions were popular. There is almost the fascination of gambling in bidding under the hammer. Besides, the wants of the miners were many, and everything from potatoes to mirrors was put up for sale.

A man, smooth-shaven, obviously a newcomer, entered. He paused for a time to watch the bidding; then, pushing his way up to the counter, he reached across and took a parcel wrapped in newspaper and started out. A dozen men had seen him and thought nothing of it. The action was as if he were merely taking a package laid aside for him.

He was less than half-way to the door when Joe Ward, the owner of the tent, leaped excitedly on to the counter and yelled:

"Thief! Stop 'im! He's stealin' a pair o' shirts!"

Hands grabbed the stranger from all directions. The parcel was snatched away, the paper torn off, and two red flannel shirts were disclosed.

Shouts of "Brand him!" "Lynch him!" "Whip him!" filled the air. The stranger seemed trying to explain, but he was so roughly knocked about that he did not have a chance to speak. Besides, what could he say when caught with the goods? But, as he was being dragged out, he turned toward Ward and did manage to shout:

"Yesterday—Mr. Freeman—I paid for 'em. You put 'em aside—I was to call!"

Gusts of sardonic laughter greeted such an ingenious defense. Besides, it was evident the man did not even know Ward's name. Ward laughed more sardonically than any.

Whippings were not uncommon, and even branding was known in those days. A man could commit murder and go scatheless. But steal a shirt? No!

The auction tent was deserted, and the stranger was hurried to the plaza. Behind him came trooping, from side streets and saloons, hundreds who jostled and crowded for a place to see the punishment. A burly miner, more drunk than sober, was given a blacksnake and told to lay on twenty-five lashes.

He had struck no more than five, and, though the cotton shirt of the stranger was cut and blood oozed from the welts, Joe Ward interrupted the process of justice to declare that he, as the injured party, was the proper executioner of the sentence. He took the whip and brought it hissing upon the back of the man.

When thirty lashes had been laid on—for the first five did not count, having been administered by one not so entitled to serve justice as Ward was—the stranger was cut loose from the post. Though he had made no outcry, tears were streaming down his face. He was told that he had just twenty minutes to get out of the self-respecting community that would be no harbor for thieves.

The stranger attempted to plead against the sentence. His voice broke, and to those robust ears it seemed that he whined.

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He said that he had just arrived the day before; that his wife was at the Harlow House. Couldn't he be given time to see her? Besides, he declared stubbornly that he had bought the shirts and paid for them. He looked into Ward's bearded face as he said so. Ward promptly, emphatically called him a liar.

And the judgment of the crowd was that he had wasted some four of his twenty minutes in idle talk. As for his wife, the Harlow House was a cheap joint near the water-front, where foreigners and other undesirables hung out.

"And, —— you, don't you ever come back, or you'll be lynched!" Joe Ward shouted as the stranger started off with forlorn haste to reach the city limits in fifteen minutes.

Now it happened that, when Col. Sutherland, seated on the veranda of the boarding-house and smoking a cigar, overheard remarks about the whipping, he asked a few questions.

"Colonel, you never liked Ward, but you ought t' 've seen him handle that whip. He done it proper!"

The colonel thoughtfully smoked his cigar out; then he stood up and straightened his coat collar and tapped his narrow bow tie. He was a little man, very erect, dignified and quiet. He was always in clean linen and broadcloth, and his manners were ceremoniously polite. The colonel had been known to address a ruffian politely even as he shot him down.

Col. Sutherland made his way down toward the wharf and entered the Harlow House, where after some inquiries he was shown up-stairs to a room, upon the door of which he rapped.

"What is it, please?" said a woman's voice.

"Pardon me, madam," replied the colonel, looking at the door as if talking to the lady herself. "I b'lieve that I bring info'mation pe'taining to youah husban'."

The door was opened, and the colonel was confronted by a tall woman in shabby black. She had been crying. Tears were fresh in her eyes. She was nervous, afraid. But neither the shabby black taffeta, the red eyes and streaked cheeks nor the nervous fearfulness affected her poise or concealed her soft beauty. The veriest scoundrel would at once have felt himself in the presence of a gentlewoman.

COL. SUTHERLAND was surprized. The Harlow House had an evil reputation. He stiffened his straight shoulders and bowed, hat in hand.

"My husband? Is he hurt? I have been so worried! Please—please—nothing has happened to him?"

Her hands were tense at her breast, and her dark sad eyes were straining at the colonel's face.

Col. Sutherland had come to her because he would go any place where he heard that a woman was, or might be, in distress. Women meant more to him than—well, than just women. He might possibly under pressure admit that some were bad, but he would probably insist that even these had their good points. But here was a woman of extreme, of sensitive, refinement. It was evident in her voice, her face, her bearing.

"Youah husban' has met with a slight misfo'tune. Do not be unduly alarmed. No, no. He is not—ah—not wounded. But—ah—pa'don me, madam, but he has had the misfo'tune to be—be—suspected of stealin'."

The woman almost collapsed, but with an effort she maintained her poise. Very solemnly, with the quiet pathos of despair, as if after all what did this latest misfortune mean to one who had had so many, she assured the colonel that it could not possibly be so; that Frank Cox was a man who would starve but would not steal.

The colonel—though he said nothing of the whipping—related the evidence. To his amazement Mrs. Cox insisted that her husband had bought those shirts out of a very slender purse the day before. He had, she said, paid for both, but the storekeeper—Ward kept the tent open as a store when no auction was going on—had explained that there was only one shirt of the size wanted in stock but that he would open a new stock and lay the parcel aside.

"He told him," she added, "just where the parcel would be and that Frank could reach right over and get it."

"Madam," declared the colonel respectfully, "do not fo' a moment presume that I doubt youah statement. But are you sure?"

"He showed Frank exactly where the shirts would be. Told him to just come in and get them. It was an auction room or something, and the storekeeper said that he would probably be busy."

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The colonel gently stroked his short, black beard.

"My husband is in jail? May I see him? Oh, I must see him!"

The colonel explained that he did not think it could be arranged at once, but tomorrow—certainly. He added—

"Did youah husban' chance to say who sold him the shirts?"

"Yes, he did. Mentioned it particularly. It was the owner of the store—introduced himself to Frank. A very polite man—Mr. Fremont—or Freeman—that is it. Freeman, Mr. Freeman."

"Freeman? Freeman?" The colonel pondered the name.

Cox had called to Ward, addressing him as Freeman. It was strange.

"My husband," she went on, "mentioned how courteous and interested Mr. Freeman was. We are strangers here—and stopped in this hotel because it—its price is low. I am beginning to think it is not very desirable at any price. My husband, sir, has had much trouble. That is why we came to California. Frank thought it would change our luck—as he called it."

"Freeman? Freeman? Pa'don me, madam, but did youah husband evah hear of a man by the name of Joe Ward?"

If the colonel had suddenly drawn his gun and thrown it into her face, she would not have recoiled before him in more of a fright. She drew back with something like terror in her eyes.

"Madam, let me assure you that Mr. Ward is no frien' of mine. If I mention his name, it is only to ask if you could suggest what motive he might have in wishin' to accuse youah husban' of stealin'!"

"Oh, my God! Again!" she moaned and leaned against the door post.

Then something caught fire within her, and she told of how she had married Frank Cox against the wishes of Joseph Ward, who had offered himself as a husband—of how Frank Cox had been accused of murdering and robbing a miserly old woman—of how he had been convicted and sentenced for life. She told of how she had never for a moment believed her husband guilty—of how, when Ward had gone to California in the gold rush, a half-idiot of a boy who had been the chief witness confessed that Ward was the murderer and had paid and threatened him, the boy, into testifying that it was Cox—of how Cox had been pardoned and they had come to California to start over.

The colonel listened attentively, and, when she had finished, he said—

"Pa'don me, but Ward did not wear a bea'd when you knew him?"

"No. He was smooth-shaven."

"Uhuh," said the colonel, and he nodded understandingly.

Then he sent for a hack, and he took Mrs. Cox with him to his boarding-house and introduced her to Mrs. Sutherland, who instantly became as a mother.

And, though it was late in the afternoon, the colonel called for a buckboard and a blanket, and he drove in the direction that Cox had gone. He found him huddled miserably in the shadow of a Mexican tent, while a fat old dirty woman with pity in her eyes and axle grease on her fingers rubbed the bruised, torn back.

That night Cox slept in the colonel's bed, and none knew that he had even come back to town, for the blanket had concealed his features when he rode with the colonel.

THE next afternoon the auction tent was crowded. Joe Ward was on the table extolling his articles and bantering the men into bids.

Col. Sutherland came in, bowed slightly to greetings and slowly, unobstrusively, edged his way nearer to the feet of the auctioneer. A silver watch went amid strenuous bidding for four hundred and seventy dollars, and Ward was feeling joyous in the knowledge of some four hundred per cent. profit.

"Ah, Colonel," he shouted down. "Glad to see you. Anything here you'd like to have put up?"

"I'm in need, suh, of a blacksnake," said the colonel evenly, politely.

"Hey, Pete! Get out one o' them plaited rawhides with the shotted handle. Finest made. Eight-plait rawhide—hear 'er go!" And he cracked the ten-foot whip over the head of the crowd. "What am I bid?"

"Five dolla's, suh," said the colonel.

"Ten," came an answer.

Joe Ward had two or three men on his staff whose business it was to mingle with the crowd and judiciously run up the bids.

"Fifteen, suh."

"Twenty."

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The colonel hesitated. Then, as if to leave his competitor far behind, he shot the bid to thirty. And at thirty it went.

"There you are, Colonel. The finest whip this side o' Denver. Fine as any made."

Ward handed it down.

Several people good-naturedly tossed remarks at the colonel over the bargain and as to what he was going to do with it; but he soberly drew the money from his purse and handed it up to Ward, and Ward put it into his pocket. He kept no books.

"Just a little room, gentlemen," said the colonel, pressing against those nearest him.

They gave back curiously, and Ward looked down grinning. It seemed that the dignified little colonel was going to indulge in some kind of a joke.

With a practised hand the colonel tossed the lash into the air, and it came down with an angry swish, and the viperous rawhide curled around the waist of Joe Ward. He leaped nearly to the roof and howled all the way up and down.

"My——,Colonel—a joke is a——"

He was breathless with pain and surprize but was desperately trying to take it as a joke.

Laughter rose and roared over the crowd. Then as suddenly came silence when the colonel began speaking.

"A joke, suh! I was nevah mo'e in earnest in my life, suh! Mr. Ward, you will be good enough to explain to these gentlemen present why you accused that gentleman yeste'day of stealin' shirts that he had paid you fo', suh!"

The confusion of the damned was upon Ward. He had to answer, and he knew that no matter what he said the crowd would believe Col. Sutherland. The colonel was one of those men whose word is never doubted.

"Now, Colonel—Colonel—I'll tell you, Colonel—" Ward began placatingly.

"The gentleman's name was Cox, Mr. Frank Cox, wasn't it, suh?"

"Yes, yes. Frank Cox. I did him a favor once, and the blackguard——"

"Yes, suh. He married the lady with whom you wished an alliance? Wasn't that it, suh?"

"I didn't hold that against him, Colonel. But murder——"

"Yes, suh. Mu'der. An' Mr. Cox was sent to prison?"

"Where he belongs. The——"

"An' you came to California an' then heard that Cox had been pa'doned. But we already knew youah name as Ward; so you couldn't change it. But you raised a bea'd, and, when you accidentally met Cox, you tol' him youah name was Freeman. An' you—" the colonel went on and explained in detail how and why Ward had invented the scheme to make Cox appear as a thief and get himself whipped out of the town.

Snarls and growls and cries of "Lynch him" began to rise from the crowd, most of which included men who on the day before had been duped into countenancing the punishment of an innocent man.

"Lies, Colonel—lies!" Ward protested desperately.

"Me a liah! Suh!" the colonel's voice thundered.

Ward saw that he was deeper into the colonel's anger than ever. Among the things that Ward under no circumstances would do was fight a duel with Col. Sutherland, and, in stammering about to apologize, he confessed fully.

The crowd was angry. They were plain, direct men. They took a man's honesty for granted until he proved otherwise, and their punishment was swift and severe. They were reckless and hasty, perhaps, but they had dangerous men in their midst, and the bickerings of lawyers and legal whereases did not appeal to them. Nor were the Californians of those days concerned with helping the justice of Eastern States.

No questions were asked of those who came from all parts of the world. They were often, until the Vigilantes arose, a little lax in punishing the vicious among themselves. But, once these men of San Francisco were aroused, they dealt rigorous punishments summarily.

"You, suh," said the colonel, addressing Ward and by a gesture hushing the crowd to silence, "can have youah choice, suh, of weapons at ten paces—or throw youahself upon the mercy o' these gentlemen."

Ward began to beg for mercy and promised to leave the town—to leave California.

"You're —— well right you will!" a miner shouted as he sprang forward and jerked Ward from the table.

And to the plaza the men went, with

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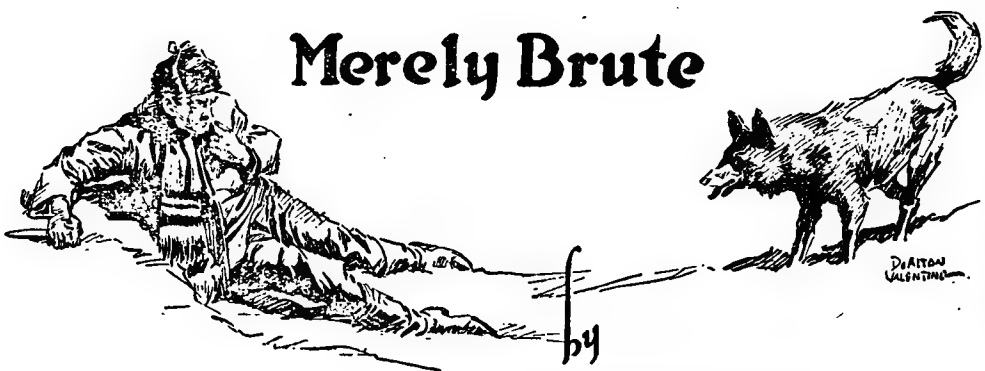
Ward leading the way. As they marched, a man ran back and forth with a big felt hat extended, and into it they dumped dust and gold-pieces which were to be presented to Frank Cox and his wife.

"Thirty lashes," said a big miner who had taken charge. "An', by——I'll put 'em on myself. I wouldn't spank a child—but a skunk——"

Thirty lashes they were, thirty fierce, biting, bloodthirsty lashes. When they were finished, Ward was sent staggering toward the sand-dunes with but twenty minutes to find himself beyond the limits of the town; while the crowd, at the head of which a man marched bearing a hat full of gold, headed for the colonel's house to offer its apologies to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Cox and to welcome them to live and prosper in San Francisco.



Merely Brute

by

George L. Catton

Author of the "The Gift of Experience," "Luck," etc.

HE RAISED his head and stared into those two gleaming eyes that stared into his. He answered the hot-breathed snarl in his face with a low, rumbling growl. Bare-fanged, noses twitching, muzzle to muzzle, two brutes faced each other in the dead silence of the endless snows.

Only the stars lived. The naked stems of the alders along the buried, solid creek stood rigid, brittle. Up on the edge of the timber-line the hanging hands of the snow-burdened spruce twitched no fingers. The stars twinkled, twinkled, great green diamonds in an utter void.

Slowly, cautiously the thinking brute's mittened hand dragged free of the snow. It crept to his belt—stopped, feeling, fumbling for his knife. The knife gleamed from its sheath. And missed.

The gray brute leaped away. Swiftly it dodged the outthrust steel and squatted back on its haunches. It waited.

The thinking brute mouthed a silent curse. There, in front of him, almost within reach of his hand! He fought to his knees again.

The thinking brute began creeping, crawling—a slow, advancing drag toward those two gleaming eyes. In his thinking brain but one thought evolved. Where he came from didn't matter; he had forgotten that long since. Where he was going he didn't know; he had lost all sense of direction in the whirling, white-walled circles of the storm. Now but one thing mattered. There, before him, waiting for his knife, was—meat!

Meat! The thinking brute raised his knife-armed hand and sank it into the snow. He lifted his left hand and lapped it over the right. His knees dragged forward. Before him, between him and the meat, yawned a sixty-inch gap.

But the gap never narrowed.

The gray brute moved. Imperceptibly almost in the muscle stealth of it, its gaunt body shifted forward, its hind legs stiffening. Unobservable under the cover of its body, its hind-feet shuffled in the snow, inching swiftly backward, its fore-paws dragging stiffly, retreating. The sixty-inch gap doubled.

The thinking brute stopped. He was a

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thinking brute. In his advanced brain memory brought an idea. He struggled upright and swung back his arm.

But the flung knife missed.

He recovered the knife. The meat retreated slowly, sidewise, as he dragged toward the steel. It stopped when he sat up—stopped and dodged.

And again the knife missed.

After that he didn't throw the knife. He couldn't find it.

But the meat was still there. There, just ahead of him!

The thinking brute began crawling again. The one thought in his mind had set itself, crystallized to an obsession. There, just ahead of him, under that gaunt gray coat was meat. Red, sweet, bloody meat!

His right hand lifted out of the snow and crossed his left. His left hand lifted and crossed the right. His knees dragged forward.

The gray brute retreated slowly, sidewise, its gleaming eyes watching over its shoulder.

The thinking brute lifted his right hand out of the snow and crossed it over his left. The mitt on that hand was gone. He lifted his left hand and crossed it over the right. His knees dragged forward. Ahead of him was meat. Meat!

The gray brute retreated sidewise, always just so far ahead, watching.

An hour passed.

DRIFT-BURIED in the endless snows a low, tiny cabin. Inside the cabin a red-hot stove. Beside the stove three men sat at a table and waited for a fourth. Their hands of cards lay face-down on the table. Then the fourth man came.

The cabin door burst inward. The fourth man staggered across the threshold and laid his burden on a bunk. He said—

"I found it by the crick."

The other three men leaped to their feet and bent down over the bunk. The bundle therein had been a man—once. Now its naked, solid hands lacked the fingers. Its knees, dragged through the shredded holes in its trousers, showed the bone. Its breathing was slow, almost imperceptible. It was all but finished.

"——!" the fourth man gasped. "It's 'Dummy'— 'Brute' Larsen!"

"Who?"

"Brute Larsen. Mushes a hundred-mile trap-line fifty miles other side of Anderson's. Anderson's claim lies dead in the center of the outside of the circle. That's thirty miles from here."

"Then what's he doing here?"

"Something's happened."

The fourth man scratched his head. Then he leaned down and ran his hand into Brute Larsen's breast pocket.

"Deaf and dumb," he explained. "If he's brought a message— Ah!"

A moment later the fourth man dropped the charcoal-smeared piece of paper bag and jumped for his mackinaw.

"Shake loose!" he snapped. "Blankets! Grub! Get into the straps! Jimmie Anderson's been burned out! Jimmie's dead trying to get out the kids! Mrs. Jimmie and the kids is holed up in one of Larsen's trap-line shacks with a week's feed! That's last Tuesday! And this is Saturday! Hit the trail!"

"But what the ——!" came a curse. "Why didn't he take them back to his own cabin, 'stead of coming here?"

"Fifty miles that way! Thirty this!"

"And it took him from Tuesday to Saturday to make thirty miles!"

"Forgetting the storm?"

"Taking the sledge?"

"Sledge, ——! We'll carry the kids!"

Over on the bunk Brute Larsen's body heaved itself up a few inches, held a moment and quit fighting.

Behind the stove the gray brute, the merely brute, chewed ice-balls from its shaggy legs. It had led a man to other men. Its task was done. It wagged its tail.

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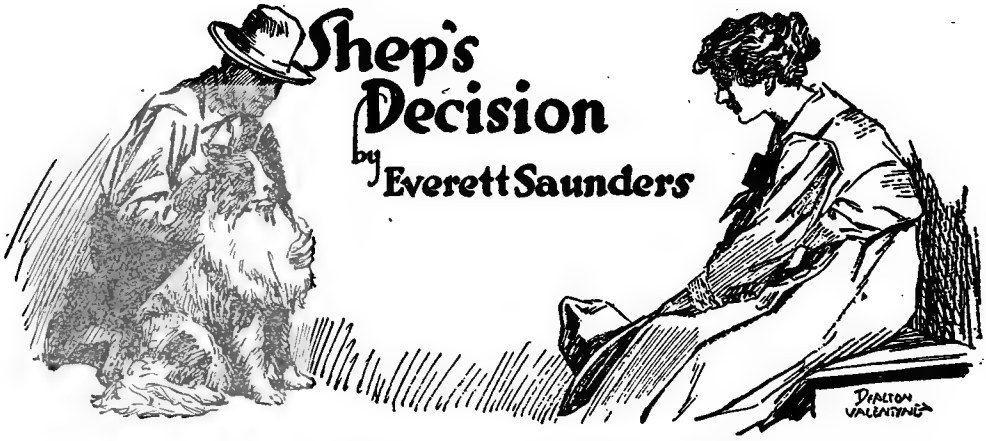

Shep's Decision

by Everett Saunders

Author of "The Silver Saddle" and "The Chuckawalla Kid."

"BUCK" PRITCHARD, camp-tender for five thousand head of Fred Vernon's sheep which were ranging in four bands among the Cross-Cut Mountains, sat cross-legged with his back against a cottonwood, splicing a broken manila rope. In front of him were fifty miles of desert emblazoned by a low sun, and behind him the huge mountain range reared itself above the plain like the ridge-pole of a continent. Scattered around him were the various marks of his calling—pack-saddles, bags and ropes and enough tinned, sacked, desiccated, sterilized and sugar-cured "grub" to load five of the six wiry little cayuses who were hobbling about a short distance away, grazing.

He was one day out from headquarters with the provisions, and another day's travel lay between him and the nearest camp. He had unpacked at a point where the White Desert met the Cross-Cut range and the sand gave way to the first of the willows and cottonwoods. His surroundings at that moment were in the main those of every day. The events of that day were typical of the days of his life. Buck's world was a world of horses, pack-saddles, ropes, deserts, mountains, bunch-grass and sheep—always sheep. A rough world and womanless.

Previous to the Fall of 1914 a sheep had been a humble animal, fluctuating in value with the tide of the market from one dollar and a half to five dollars a head; an obscure animal composed of a bundle of wool, a silly head and two pairs of small splayed hoofs that cut and trampled irreparably the bunch-grass on the range. And a sheep-herder was a still humbler animal, whose only qualification, according to popular conception, consisted in being narrow between the eyes.

But a war broke out on the teeming plains of Europe, and swiftly the influence of that war spread until it reached the farthest corners of the earth. That influence had varying manifestations. On the desert plateau region of the American continent it first evidenced itself by conferring upon the lowly sheep a long-deferred knighthood.

Sheep went from five dollars to seven dollars and a half, to ten dollars, to fifteen dollars; and still those winged prices soared upward. A man with one band of sheep became well-to-do and a personage whose ungrammatical sentences were heard with deference. A man with ten bands of sheep became wealthy.

Fred Vernon had ten bands of sheep in the Fall of 1914. Upon the arrival of the Spring of 1916 he had twenty bands. Fred Vernon was playing a hunch. Stretching his credit to the utmost, he was taking off the trembling hands of sheepmen, who couldn't read the signs and who feared a collapse, all their holdings at these unprecedented prices. With wool at sixty-five cents and still climbing and with four-month-old lambs nine dollars a head by the train-load in Chicago, he bid fair to net forty per cent. on his investment.

At seven o'clock the next morning the five cayuses again stood under their packs.

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Buck had fitted the last pack-bag in place and had taken the final deft turn with the rope.

He mounted his saddle-horse and started riding along a cattle trail, going directly into the cañon which split the mountain in twain. He led the head pack-horse. The others followed, tied head to tail.

Pritchard was now riding a comparatively new country. Up to the last Spring he had never had occasion to cover the Cross-Cut territory. This section had been preempted a generation before by the L. F. Cattle Company and held by right of priority and might. When Vernon increased his stock to a point which made the acquisition of a new range an absolute necessity, he had evinced some of the wisdom which had guided him to success in his operations.

After obtaining permits from the Government to use certain specified parts of the unfenced public domain, he bought the tolerance of the big cattle company. While he had the law on his side, he was aware of the futility of trying to oppose the antagonism of the cattlemen. He knew it was cheaper to pay outright than to risk the losses incidental to a range war.

As the day advanced, Buck climbed steadily, following cattle trails that rose ever higher and higher. He left the desert behind and passed into the great timber belt of pine, where the twisting chaparral formed low barriers on the ground. The camp-tender was on a range which, since the coming of the first pioneers, had been dedicated to cattle.

He went forward steadily but without hurry, only pausing for brief rests on the steeper trails. He expected to make camp number three early in the afternoon and would not unpack before that time.

The sun had passed the zenith. He was within a few miles of the camp. He had passed into a part of the cañon where it opened out into a wide, shallow cove near the summit of the mountains. It was a choice bit of range that Pritchard had designated for band number three, that band consisting of twelve hundred head of Lincolnshires, "coarse wools," fully mature and in their prime, at the age when they could reasonably be expected to bring a high per cent. of February lambs.

Pritchard became aware that he had company. He had not actually seen any one, nevertheless he knew that, keeping parallel with him, a few hundred yards distant was a horseman. And he wondered. He wondered because in the Cross-Cut range and in like places wayfarers have unlimited opportunity to commune with their own souls, while the opportunities to swap the makin's with a stranger are rare enough to be considered a luxury and, therefore, not to be passed up. Not to be shunned, at any rate.

It was not some occult sixth sense peculiar to camp-tenders and to other men of the great outdoors that had revealed to him the presence of another rider. For some time his horses had been turning their heads with pointed ears to the left. Once, on stopping suddenly, he had heard a horse thresh through a clump of chaparral. And once there had been raised on the air, clear and ringing, the first bars of a horse's nicker. The call had been suddenly strangled as if by a spade bit jerked savagely against a tender mouth.

Buck Pritchard did not become anxious or nervous, not having, so far as he had ever been able to determine, any nerves. But he did feel a sense of annoyance. It was a violation of the standards of etiquette and of the established order of things for a rider to behave as this unknown rider was behaving. There was little excuse for the furtiveness. Buck began keeping a sharp lookout to ascertain if possible the identity of this uncompanionable traveler.

Being defeated in this, he resorted to a ruse. Upon passing through a thick grove of young straight firs, he suddenly dismounted. He led his saddle-horse off the trail and hitched him to a limb. He untied the rope from the halter of the lead pack-horse and sent the five animals along the trail alone. Then he ran quickly to the edge of the grove, where he commanded a view of a narrow open space that cleft the timber for some distance up the side of the mountain.

HE WAITED for some minutes. Finally his patience was rewarded. His pack-animals had passed out of sight in a bend of the trail. Far up the mountainside a horseman came into view. Buck knew for certain then that his suspicion of secrecy had been well founded. The horseman came carefully from the screen of trees. Then once in the open

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he urged his horse into a quick trot and quickly disappeared in the shadows on the farther side.

Buck had been convinced of one essential fact, but he was hopelessly in the dark as to motive. However, he had made one interesting discovery: his horseman was a horsewoman, a slim little creature in a short riding-skirt. So much he could be sure of at that distance.

He went back to his horse and rode forward to overtake the pack-animals. He now had something to ponder over. Strangely, he was relieved to discover in the mysterious rider a woman instead of a man. Instead of deepening, it lightened the mystery. A woman was a kind of perverse creature to him at the best, dealing in sophistry and speciousness. There had been times in his youth—he was twenty-five now—when he had given the dance-hall sirens repeated opportunities to reveal to him their real natures.

They had shown an amazing ability to make a man who had come in flush with wages suddenly and irrevocably broke and send him back from the venal geniality of town to shovel hay to bands of bleating sheep through the Winter blizzards. This silly stalking of him, if it did not actually fit into his idea of the rôle of woman, was at least explainable by her inexplicable vagaries.

With a man it would have been different. A man who rides the range alone, avoiding a face-to-face meeting, is apt to be one of the kind who build small signal-fires at night on high points of ground and quickly extinguish them; who ride with short bars of steel on their saddles for working over brands; who give sheriffs, deputies and posses grim jobs to do—and who sometimes put long-continued strains on pieces of lariat, the other ends of which are tied to strong, outstanding limbs of trees.

But it didn't matter much to Buck what a woman did. She might just be interested in his—at the present moment—rather flat purse. While it was hard to establish a logical connection, since he did not have in mind an actual hold-up, he did not puzzle over dark details. If it pleased the woman to ride this lonesome waste alone and spy upon him, instead of waiting for his coming—which would never be—where the glasses rang and the pianos jangled, so be it.

But, when he suddenly rode down upon the tent which had been packed in and stretched for the herder of band number three and when the two young dogs, who should have been with the herder and the sheep at this hour, came leaping out at him with shrill barking, his misgivings smote him with tenfold force. That something was wrong was palpable. Either he had misjudged the trustworthiness of the man to whom he had entrusted his favorite dog, Shep, or some person, or persons, who hated the devastation wrought on the bunch-grass range by the small, sharp hoofs of the sheep, had wreaked vengeance on the camp.

Quickly Buck leaped from his horse, ran to the tent and threw back the flap. The tent was as bare as *Mother Hubbard's* cupboard.

Buck let fall the flap and stepped back. There was trouble in the air, and he lacked a key to the meaning of it. The two young dogs, half the caretaking contingent of the camp, squatted on their haunches near him, waiting. It was obvious they had been relieved from discipline by either the voluntary or the forced desertion of the herder. The fourth responsible member was still unaccounted for. That was Shep.

Buck's worry over that dog was even greater than for the herder whom he had deemed worthy to use Shep during the Summer. Herders came, and herders went. Sometimes they were conscientious workmen; at other times, to use Buck's phrase, they were not "worth enough of Remington's smokeless and soft-nosed bullets to blow them to ——."

But there was only one Shep. Shep was "the best sheep-dog that ever saved shoe leather for a lazy herder." Buck had taken him as a puppy and trained him during his own long-ago herding days. Shep, by an instance of super-dog intelligence and exertion, had once saved a band of sheep from a pile-up. Shep had once attacked a preying cougar and had almost got himself killed. When Buck broke his leg one Summer on the Midas, Shep had carried a penciled note to a neighboring camp for help. When Shep's feet had become raw and sore from incessant working, Buck had cut up a pair of buckskin gauntlets and made soft shoes for each of the four paws.

These thoughts and many others flashed through Buck's mind as he turned from the

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empty tent. His mind was ranging widely for the best course of action. He disliked to leave the packs and the pack-horses. But he realized that the tired ponies had already been too long under the loads. They couldn't carry them forever. And he couldn't be everywhere at once. If this were the work of enemies, he realized he was largely at their mercy at the best.

With haste he threw off the packs and carried them into the tent. He picketed the five pack-animals on an exceptionally good plot of grass that had been reserved for the camp-tender's horses. Then he mounted his saddle-horse and rode away to find the sheep, the two young dogs following at his heels.

He found them working in a straggling band along the bald north side of a mountain, and with them, like the trusty marshal he was, was Shep. It was with a great pang of relief that Buck located him. Shep had been wandering disconsolately along the far side of the band, uncertain, with a responsibility too heavy for even a brainy dog. The super-dogs who act on their own responsibility have in their care only a negligible portion of the far-reaching, ununified multitude of witless, helpless bundles of wool and tender meat which composed band number three.

Shep was well versed in the details of the work, but generalities were beyond him. He was flitting from point to point, turning back small groups which were straggling away with the temerity born of ignorance. He swept upon them like an animate, tangible whirlwind, causing them to turn and flee in a short-lived panic back to the main band. But his work was not thoroughly planned, lacking the directing head of the lordly, profane human.

His quick eyes had caught sight of the man before Pritchard had located him, and he came to attention, ears standing upright, quick with expectancy, joyously awaiting the order to be wigwagged in simple code.

Buck made one sweeping gesture with his right arm. That was all. Shep went, no longer uncertain or wavering.

Buck spoke crisply to one of the others and motioned.

"Go way round 'em, Ned."

The dog leaped away, and the vanguard of the band bent inward to the single-handed attack, the animals converging, the rolls of dirty white wool forming a living carpet which slid along the ground.

Buck sent the last dog, who had stood waiting, his eyes shining with eagerness, in another direction.

WITHIN five minutes the straggling band had become a congested mass, bunched in a tight, irregular circle, all surging centerward.

Then Buck counted the sheep. He could not count each individual of that shifting mass. But immediately he had an approximation of the losses which he would unhesitatingly have pronounced authoritative. He looked for the eighteen black sheep who were the markers of the band. He found sixteen. Therefore he knew that somewhere within a radius of a few miles were one hundred and thirty-five, possibly alive, but more likely dead.

He wasted no precious time in bootless speculation. With a complex of gestures and staccato commands he told the two young dogs to stay with the herd. With Shep he swiftly circled, looking for the outbound trail.

He found the trail and at no great distance began to come upon evidences of havoc. First they found the half-eaten carcass of a sheep; then three at short intervals with their throats torn, where the coyotes who had cut them from the band and driven them away had taken their dessert of warm blood after gorging with flesh.

Shep nosed each carcass and growled deeply with lifting hair.

After an hour's search they found the remnant of the stragglers. Pritchard counted one hundred and twenty. These the man and dog drove with all possible speed back to the band.

The sun had set by the time he had finally rounded up the sheep on the bed ground. Buck determined, while it was still light enough, to do some reconnoitering. It was hazardous to leave the sheep. It was also hazardous even to be in that locality if the disappearance of the herder was really the work of enemies.

Buck first looked to the horses; then he rode up the side of the mountain and dropped into another prong of the cañon on the other side. If he found that, due to his unfamiliarity with the territory, he had stationed the sheep close to some small

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landholder who had wished to hold the adjacent range, he might discover a cause of the trouble.

Buck's experience embraced at least two range wars. He had seen one band of sheep totally wiped out—by saltpeter scattered over a portion of their range. He had seen two or three sanguine shooting scrapes and others threatened. Indirectly he had learned of sheep-herders being hanged.

In past years neither the herder nor the sheep had been of great value. It was literally a less bulky task to remove one man than a thousand or fifteen hundred sheep, and the courses were equally efficacious. If a territory were given the unequivocal reputation of being banned to sheep, herders could not be found who would take the risk of holding them on these places. And the owner was apt to develop a less vindictive frame of mind if allowed to recover his property.

Buck knew that at the present time, when a band of sheep was worth so considerable a sum of money, no range enemy was apt to take action directly against the animals, thereby calling down upon himself the dire vengeance which is born of heavy financial loss.

However, those who were responsible for the removal of a herder were not expected to guarantee protection against wildcats, panthers, coyotes and bears.

Beyond the ridge Buck found a high valley similar to the one he had left, lush with wild grass in the open space.

Twilight had deepened almost to night when he finally topped a low raise and came up against a rude fence. Near at hand he could make out a group of corrals and log buildings. There was no light nor sign of life in the cabin.

Tying his horse in the shadow, Buck went forward on foot. He wished, if possible, to find who were the owners of the place. He had not known that the L. F. had a camp in the vicinity.

He heard not a sound as he approached. There was something infinitely lonesome, almost ominous, in that empty habitation in the lonely place. He knocked gingerly at the door. Receiving no answer, he turned and walked away, with difficulty resisting the impulse to keep looking over his shoulder.

When Buck had mounted and was riding away through the gathering darkness, he had almost to admit to himself that something in the atmosphere of the place was seeping through the malleable steel casing of his nerves and setting them all on edge.

"Gits my nanny," he muttered to himself.

And then, just as he made the summit of the ridge dividing the two coves, there came to his senses the first definite instance of the presence of the unknown agents of destruction since the disappearance of the woman—if she was one of them. Faint with distance, but clear on the thin air, came a gunshot—and on the heels of the sound the dim cry of a dog.

At the risk of his life, Pritchard urged his horse into a gallop and went plunging down the rough mountainside in the semi-darkness.

He reached the bed ground. Though he had left the sheep content, full of grass and sheepish happiness, he found them all on their feet, bunched tightly, seething with panic.

He kept guardedly in the shadows. Before he called the dogs, he drew his gun. Then he raised his voice in one call and waited.

He waited long, and, as the minutes passed, grew the fear for Shep. Though he still lacked details, he knew in a general way what he "was up against." The herder had not run away, unless he had gone at the point of a gun. Most likely he had been dumped into a prospect hole. There were inimical forces in the neighborhood. Their identity didn't matter so much as the mere fact of their existence. That being the case, he needed Shep; needed him badly.

Suddenly came the soft patter of feet, and, almost before Buck could turn, he heard Shep's anxious whine and felt the dog's cold muzzle on his hand. But, though the man, reassured, called again and yet again, no other dogs came to him. Shep nosed him, whining low, as if trying to explain what had happened.

With infinite caution Buck made his way around to a point near the tent. Leaving his horse, he crept forward. Listening long before he ventured, he crept in. The tent was utterly empty. After that he did not trouble himself to look for his pack-horses. It was a certainty that they had carried away the packs.

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HE PICKETED his horse that night in a tiny opening near the bed ground. There was little feed for the beast, but, then, the missing of a few meals was of no more importance to the horse than to him. He had not eaten since morning. There was only one real problem on his mind, and that was how to get the sheep safely away.

His own safety was a secondary consideration, as was the question of meals. Nevertheless, before he went to sleep rolled in his Navajo saddle-blanket, while still on the borderland of consciousness, the hunger pangs kept the vain wish in his mind that he had slipped into his pocket a few crackers and a couple of cans of pork and beans.

Shep lay across his feet. His horse stamped restlessly about on the trampled, smelly ground, browsing on the leaves, tugging at his picket-rope.

At the first streak of day Buck started the sheep. He led his horse. On the saddle was tied a broken-handled frying-pan, sole remnant of the looted camp. The skillet would serve for the cooking of grouse or pheasants or, in case no game fell in his way, mutton, should it become necessary to slaughter a sheep as a last resort. But on this particular morning he had no time for breakfast. It was vitally necessary to get the sheep with all speed away from the banned territory.

Shep worked the sheep, pushing them along as fast as they could be made to go, handicapped as the driver was by lack of help. Buck kept a sharp, unrelenting lookout. He saw nothing to add to his anxiety, however, except for a brief moment on a sky-line the form of a horse and rider. Whether it was the woman or not, he was not able to determine. He thought it was the same horse he had seen her riding the day before, but he could not be sure.

The sun had got up and had driven away the morning chill. But, stimulated by the clean, crisp air, hunger pangs were raging in Buck's body. He did not deem it wise to waste any time as yet on an unessential function like breakfast.

But two hours later he noticed the sheep, straggling ahead of him, congregating curiously about some object. They drifted onward, and Buck, following, found a fine four-point buck deer, sleek, plump, tawny-haired, its antlers in the velvet.

Buck's appetite was too complaining to permit his conscience much room to quibble over fine points of private rights. Doubtless the deer had been shot at so great a distance that the sound of the shot had died before it reached him. And, as deer sometimes do, the splendid animal, after receiving his death-wound, had fled more swiftly than a cloud shadow over his familiar hills, driven by the fear of death, until life had suddenly left him and dropped him quivering. The blood on the lips from the death-hemorrhage and that which had oozed from the bullet-wound just back of the shoulder had barely congealed. The body was still warm.

"The people around here don't seem to be spillin' over with law an' order, anyway. Shep," Buck said to the dog. "I guess we'll be in fashion if we cop something that don't belong to us. I don't believe we can eat quite all of this bird, but, if you feel like I do, we can make an awful hole in him."

He slit the skin, bared a hind quarter and cut away a great piece of the meat. He tossed a generous chunk to the dog and soon had a thick steak sputtering in the pan.

Shep wolfed down his portion and stood licking his chops, while Pritchard turned the savory steak and sensed the rich odors with vast appreciation and impatience. Buck with the eye of an artist was putting on the last tints of brown when the dog began twisting and squirming in a strange manner. As the man looked at him, puzzled, he went down, writhing in a paroxysm of agony, white froth pouring from his mouth.

"Strychnin, by ——!" Buck said in a voice that was not his own.

And over him came a rush of such blinding anger as he had never known. Every sense of physical fear left him in that moment, even anxiety for the thousands of dollars represented by that band of silly, helpless sheep.

Pritchard hurled the meat and the pan upon the fire, ran to his horse, who was grazing a short distance away, and tore his mackinaw coat from behind the saddle.

He wrapped the quivering dog in the coat and leaped upon his horse.

"They'll pay for this! —— —— their dirty souls!" he gritted between his teeth as he turned his horse, spurred him into a swift gallop and went with the speed of a

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charging bull back along the ground he had gained at a snail's pace that morning.

His objective was the cabin on the other side of the high ridge. His elemental purpose in heading for it lay in that he expected to find in a human habitation remedies for the poisoned animal. A secondary motive was that he expected and ardently hoped to meet one or more of the inhabitants; and he fully intended to shoot on sight without challenge or warning the first suspicious-acting person he met.

His horse was reeling by the time he reached the crest of the mountain. Without pausing, he plunged down the other side. He opened the gate without dismounting and galloped toward the cabin, his gun held in his hand.

As he rode up, his roving eyes found one object which indissolubly linked the lone cabin with his mysterious enemies. In a corral, standing dejectedly over a pile of hay, was the horse he had seen the woman riding the day before. The animal was gaunt and jaded to a horrid degree, as if just off a merciless ride.

Buck by now had been driven into such an abnormal state of mind that he dropped from his panting horse and ran toward the house without hesitancy. If he had stopped to consider, he might have expected a gunshot from the shelter of the cabin, which would quickly and effectually have ended all his combative instincts. But he didn't stop to consider. He didn't care. He merely drew back the hammer of his revolver as he reached the door.

He did not even weigh the strangeness of this attack on an enemy who was likely to prove a woman. The whole body of circumstance was grotesque. This woman, if she were the author of that last unspeakable iniquity, could not even qualify as a border town harpy of venal smiles, painted lips and heart of stone. What kind of a weird, murderous female creature, what range-riding Lucrezia she might be, he knew not. It all defied his imagination.

Holding the bundle of dog and coat under his left arm, he lifted the latch, pushed the door open quickly and stepped in, blinking his eyes to accustom them to the semi-darkness of the room, holding his gun cocked and ready before him.

And the woman was there, but she was not the murderous, witch-like hag he had expected—but a young woman, slim of body, with a great mass of black hair, her face buried in her arms on a rude table, her shoulders shaking with weeping.

AT THE creak of the door she sprang to her feet in a panic. Buck saw she had great black eyes, now slightly swollen, oval cheeks down which a flood of tears were coursing, and red lips from which fear had drawn out the pucker of sobs. She gave a gasp—of relief it seemed—at sight of a stranger. Buck, being a man, albeit a driven and harried one, gasped at her beauty.

But ever present in his consciousness was the memory of the women he had known in youth, one by one his illusions broken, his hard-earned wages squandered; and he remembered the present circumstances. His heart was already hard.

"I want all the salt-bacon grease you've got—an' —— quick," he said, "for the dog you've strychnined tryin' to kill me!"

She started quickly with a furtive manner, as if trained to instant obedience. He warned further.

"An' don't go tryin' to pull nothin', because I'll shoot an' shoot to kill. I ain't never throwed a gun down on a woman before. But there's somethin' rotten around here, and, if you're mixed up in it, you ain't a woman. I can't let myself git killed, because I ain't goin' to see eighteen thousand dollars' worth of ewes go to the devil just because a bunch of greasers wants a few sections of range. Now git that grease!"

She brought the fat in a battered lard pail.

Buck laid the gasping dog on the floor and went to work. He scraped out handfulls of the stuff and crammed it between Shep's jaws. The dog swallowed it.

The girl knelt beside him as he worked, aiding and offering suggestions. When the grease had been used up, Buck called for water and a shallow pan. She brought them instantly. He poured the contents of his tobacco-sack into the pan, moistened the tobacco with water. This also he crammed down the dog's reluctant throat.

They worked side by side over the dog for an hour. So absorbed in the work was he, that Buck failed to notice the discrepancy between the situation and his preconceived notions of the girl.

Finally, the paroxysms past, Shep was

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lying breathing jerkily on the floor. The girl carried Buck a pan of warm water and a cake of coarse soap. He smiled his thanks and washed and dried his hands.

Then she picked up his revolver from where it had lain forgotten on the floor and presented it to him, stock first. Remembering his threats of a short while before, Buck flushed red under his tan.

He was still more hopelessly at sea in regard to the nature of his enemies. This girl he found himself utterly unable to associate with the broken horse in the corral and with the gunshot of the night before, which had doubtless killed one of his badly needed dogs. On looking at her, he could not repress a thrill at the beauty which persisted in her face despite her worn look. She was unmistakably from south of the Mexican border. She spoke with a slight, an almost indescribable brogue, a slight burr in her Rs and a slightly foreign tang in her idioms.

He was almost forced to believe in her, and a sudden resolution came to him, of which he was afterward ashamed, thinking he had been duped again by a woman's face as he had so often been in former years.

"Say," he spoke, "there's some shady work goin' on around here that I don't git the drift of. In fact, 'shady' don't describe it. Somebody's bumped off my herder an' two of my dogs, an' that—" he pointed to the dog on the floor—"is the result of an underhand try at me—with strychnin. I don't think you're in with whoever it is, though everything points this way. So, what I want to know, who is it? They want that band of sheep off this range—that's a cinch. But we've squared ourselves with the L. F., an' I can't understand it."

At his words her manner changed utterly. It was not so much a departure of the friendliness she had shown toward him as it was a return of the fear he had surprized in her on his arrival. She ran to the window, first on one side of the room and then the other, and peered around nervously. She came back.

"You'd better go," she said. "Go now. I can't tell you anything."

Buck laughed harshly.

"All right," he said, and, stooping, he lifted his dog. "But, before I go, I want to say one thing: when you come riding around me again, don't go sneaking behind fir thickets an' clumps of chaparral. Come out in the open so I can be sure it's you. I don't want to git you, but I'm sure goin' to open up on the first suspicious-lookin' skeep-killer I see that ain't you. An' this old gat of mine carries well. She was made with a ten-inch barrel."

"I haven't been riding—" she began; then her hand went to her lips as if she had betrayed a secret.

Buck laid the dog on the floor. A new thought had come to him.

"I'm goin' to leave my dog here," he said. "I'll have more than I can do drivin' them sheep without carryin' him. Take care of him till day after tomorrow. I'll git the band to the next camp and come back for him."

She hesitated.

"I'll pay you twice what you say it's worth," the man insisted.

"All right," she said; "I will." She stooped and caressed the animal's head. "Now you must go—go—go!"

FOR two days Pritchard labored prodigiously, walking yards for every inch gained on the tedious way. At the end of the second day, he pushed his charges up to the bed ground of camp number two.

The herder came out with his dogs and a choice fund of profanity to keep the sheep from mixing. He failed and came striding in anger toward the man who had driven them up. His rebuke was stilled when he recognized the driver.

The herder led Buck's gaunt horse to a place rich with grass, while the exhausted man fell ravenously upon a huge pot of mulligan, compounded of sage-chicken and a variety of canned vegetables.

It was late the next morning, when he was saddling his horse for the trip back to the cabin for his dog, that one of the L. F. punchers passing stopped at the camp. To him Buck turned for enlightenment.

"You've run foul of 'Mex Pete's' gang," the cowboy told him. "They come in a couple of years back with a little bunch of cattle and filed on a quarter of a section up there to have an excuse for staying. We've been on to 'em for a long time, but we've been too busy to clean 'em out. At first they used some judgment in their stealin'. But here lately they're goin' too strong.

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"They don't seem to have no use for a range-cow that can't raise at least six calves in a season. An' they expect a scrub longhorn to draft pure-blood Herefords. They're sure gittin' purty brave when they start to run a man like Vernon off the range. I guess it's about time to go an' git 'em. Personally I don't hardly like to go about stringin' up a woman. But I'll see that Vernon gits word of this right away."

"A woman?" Buck queried with a sinking at his heart.

"Sure. You'd see her ridin' around if you was up there long. Well, I've got to be shakin' a leg. I hate to ask for them," he grinned, "but I sure would like to have a few capsules for brain tablets."

Buck handed him a book of cigaret-papers.

"I'm moochin' tobacco off the herder, myself," he said. "This friend of yours, Pete, walked off with my whole pack. An' he wasn't even thoughtful enough to leave a sack of tobacco."

"Then I'll trade you some for half your papers. I've got plenty of the fillin' to last me to camp."

Men have been sentenced by duly constituted courts and hanged for murder on circumstantial evidence. Men have been hanged for cattle-stealing by self-appointed judges, but not on mere circumstantial evidence. And no man can be sent to the penitentiary for rustling when the prosecution lacks direct and unimpeachable proof of guilt. Nothing less is sufficient to convict—nothing less than being apprehended with a stolen animal in his possession or the attempt to sell one which can be proven beyond question to belong to another man. Hence the long immunity of Mex Pete's gang and of others whose means of support is of the same questionable character.

It was a dangerous mission which Buck was undertaking when he rode back for his dog. He was well aware that to show himself in that vicinity was to invite a gunshot from cover. If the value of the animal had been measurable by mere dollars, he would not have gone. But dollars can not buy a friend, and danger does not prevent a man from going to a friend's aid.

And yet the foreboding, which the locality seemed to have the power of bringing to his mind, rose up and assailed him as he neared the place. He was not upborne by the vitalizing anger he had felt on his last trip to the cabin. He realized his danger keenly. The loneliness and melancholy of the place seemed settling like a gray cloud over his spirit.

As he came in view of the cabin, he rode warily, not with the pell-mell, reckless haste of his former trip. He looked toward the corrals. He saw no jaded horse. No smoke arose from the adobe chimney. The windows were vacant. The place was to all appearances empty, deserted.

He was still some distance from the house, riding softly, his horse's hoofs striking silently in the dark earth. Suddenly from that inhospitable house came a crash, the beat of footsteps and the smash of overturned furniture. That series of sounds was the climax of his evil boding. Like a flash he was off his horse and sheltered behind the wall of flesh.

A moment passed, and then he knew that his approach had not been the cause of the tumult. There is something deadly and ominous, at the same time unique, in the sounds denoting that two human beings have descended to the level of beasts and are struggling each to extinguish the life of the other. The clump and smash of overturned furniture. The brief silences, pregnant, aquiver with the menace of savage determination.

Buck ran to the window, stepping on his toes to prevent the rattling of his spur rowels.

He saw Shep lying sprawled in a corner, as if felled by a club. He saw what he first took to be two women struggling, locked in a tight embrace, swaying around the room, crashing against the rude furniture, overturning stools and benches. But in that instant he saw a heavy black wig fall from the head of one of them, revealing the closely cropped, black poll of a man.

This man had his fingers locked on the woman's throat. Her head was bent backward in agony, white teeth bared in a terrible grimace, eyes starting from her face. The man's face was pressed against her breast for shelter from her catlike fingers, which were tearing at his flesh, feeling with insane desperation for his eyes.

The woman was Buck's girl of mystery, associated in his mind with such discrepant

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pictures as worn-out, broken horses; a female thing, furtively spying, like a thug; a pretty tear-stained face and deft, womanly fingers, quick to keep the life in a dying animal. In her antagonist might have lain an explanation of many things. A little man, he was, no taller than the girl, but lithe and sinewy. He wore a short skirt, like the dress of the figure Buck had seen that first day on the trail.

All this came to Buck in the shortest fragment of time. He leaped to the door, threw it violently open and sprang into the room.

AT THE sound the man wrenched himself free from the woman, sending her reeling against the wall, where she stood, feeling at her throat with slender fingers. As he reached toward his holster, Buck fired—not to knock the gun from his hand nor to wing him, but to kill. And kill he did.

His gun roared, the quick echoes beating backward and forward and all around, like things animate and caged in the confines of the room. The dark little man staggered, clutched at the air. He was crumpling even as Buck fired the second time, crashing another bullet through his lungs.

Buck went quickly to the dog, kneeling beside him and feeling over him for broken bones. He found none, and his searching fingers had barely located the welt on the head, caused by the blow that had stunned him, when Shep regained consciousness and with the animal's reserve of strength struggled weakly to his feet.

Pritchard looked around to find the girl kneeling beside him. A great pity for her welled up in him. It was an impulse prompted by an emotion stronger than pity that put the stress on his voice when he faced her and spoke.

"Is this the headquarters of Mex Pete's gang? An' is that," pointing to the thing on the floor, "the woman that rides around, or are you? An' where is Mex Pete an' his gang? You'd better kick in with all you know, because the gang, whoever they are, have about slick-eared their last calf. Fred Vernon will have twenty men here inside two days, not countin' the sheriff and his deputies. One of the L. F. punchers is already gone with the word. Vernon will see that that bunch of rattlesnakes is chased clear to the edge of hell." Buck's voice had become more beseeching than mandatory.

"That is—was Pete," the girl breathed. "My brother. He dressed like a woman when he rode. When the cowboys began coming this way, he brought me here for a blind. He was cruel, wicked. My heart has bled—ache, you would say—for the poor horses he has almost killed on rides. Yesterday—or was it another day?—he rode one horse nearly to death and changed him for another just before you came with the dog. I don't know where they go—always riding, riding, by night and by day."

She became more coherent.

"I hid your dog when you left him here. I had brought him here to feed him and to have him for you when you came this afternoon. He came before I knew. He said I was betraying him. He was killing me. He struck the dog—Sheep, you call him—with his gun."

"Where is the rest of the cussed bunch?" Buck demanded in a queer, strained voice.

A sense of the wrongs this girl had suffered was firing him more than all their other half-revealed crimes had done. So possessed he became with the idea that unconsciously he drew his gun from the holster, snapped out the cylinder, and slipped in two cartridges to replace the empty shells. This had no resemblance to a play to the grand-stand. A gang of cattle-thieves of any reasonable number could have faced him at that moment only at heavy risk.

At Buck's last question the girl's fear seemed to return. She wrung her slender hands.

"Oh, *Madre de Dios!*" she cried. "I don't know. They come and go, always watching the back trail." She turned upon him. "Don't leave me here," she pleaded. "Take me with you."

The words swept Buck back to a sense of reality. He looked into her eyes, black as shaded pools at night, glistening with tears and deep with the memories of sorrow. He saw her wan, wet cheeks and her red lips, redder than rouge could ever have counterfeited them. He felt all his ancient, cynical resolutions oozing from him like wine from a broken cask. He looked about, as if for a wise counselor to guide him. His eyes met those of his dog.

"Shep," he said suddenly and earnestly,

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"is she on the square? Is she half as good as she is pretty? Would she—would she—well, can any woman be a square pardner?"

The girl, as if awaiting the verdict of an infallible oracle, looked to the dog for an answer.

And Shep, the man's dog, the hard worker, the game fighter and the "square pardner," indubitably understanding the questions in all their significance, gave that answer. Still betraying weakness in his movements, he turned to the girl. He met her eyes; he raised his head; his warm tongue fluttered out and kissed her cheek.

She put her arms around him and wept silently.

Buck arose to his feet and laughed shakily.

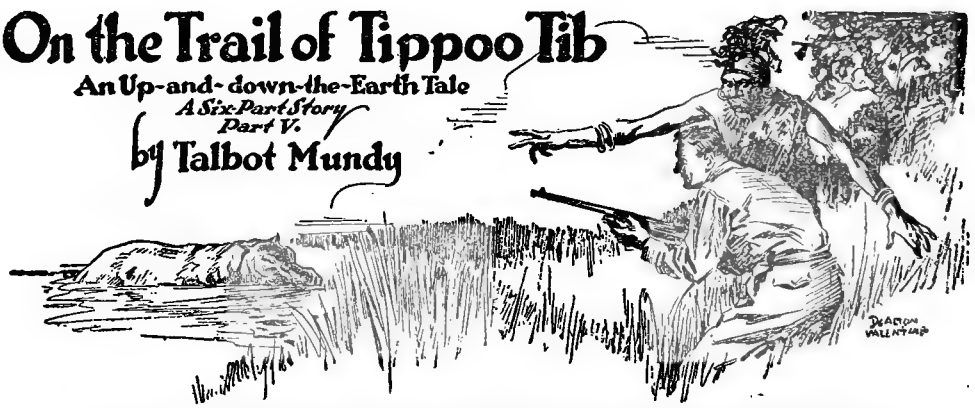
"All right, Shep, old boy," he said; "you've said it. Let's go."

On the Trail of Tippoo Tib

An Up-and-down-the-Earth Tale

A Six-Part Story
Part V.

by Talbot Mundy



Author of "Heinie Horns Into the Game," "The End of the Bad Ship Bundesrath," *etc.*

THERE was never room on the tiny after-deck for more than six people sitting elbow to elbow and back to back or knee to knee. Lady Waldon simply refused to yield her corner seat on any account at any time to any one. Coutlass refused to leave his new sweetheart, for the freely voiced reason that then Brown might make love to her; and we did not care to send both of them below for obvious reasons. That reduced open-air accommodation to a minimum, because the reed-and-tarpaulin deck was scarcely strong enough to bear the weight of two men at a time—and we were afraid to throw the whole deck overboard for fear of rain.

And by and by the rain came—out of season but no less violent because of that. It rained three windless days and starless nights, during which we had to linger alongshore close to the papyrus. In order to keep mosquitos out, we had to light a smudge in the sand-box below. The smudge added to the heat, and the heat drove men to the open air to gasp a few minutes in the rain for breath and go down again to make room for the next in turn.

Sleep on shore was impossible, for thereabouts were crocodile and snake swamps, fuller of insect life than dictionaries are of letters. Poling was next to impossible, because the soft mud bottom gave no purchase. And the oars we made out of poles were clumsy affairs; there was not room for more than two boys to try to use them at a time, even if the deck would have stood the strain of more feet, which it certainly would not have done.

Lady Waldon slept seated in her corner, with her head wrapped in a veil over which mosquitos prospected in gangs. Coutlass and his lady-love endured rain and insects in the open, too, but they suffered less, because of mutual distraction. The rest of us took turns with the natives below, lying packed between them, much as sardines nestle in a can, wondering whether the famous Black Hole of Calcutta was really such a record-breaker as they say. Brown was of opinion that the Black Hole was a nosegay compared to our lot.

"Besides which, they probably had rum with 'em!" he added.

Some of the porters grew sick under the strain. The third night out the man next

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me began coughing, shaking my frame as much as his own as he racked himself, for we were wedged together with only the thickness of his blanket and mine between us, and I was jammed tight against the ship's side. Toward morning he grew quiet—grew colder, too. When dawn came we found he had coughed up the most of his lungs on to my white English blanket.

I gave them the blanket to bury him in, and we poled the *Queen of Sheba* inshore to find a place to dig a hole, leaving the body stretched on some tree roots while we prospected. We should have known enough by that time to leave four or five men on guard close by; as it was, when the men still on board the *dhow* began kicking up a babel, Fred and I came running and jumping back through the marsh just in time to see a crocodile wriggle off into the water with the corpse in his jaws feet first. Fred fired a shotted salute but missed.

By day we passed villages on higher ground, where we might have procured more food if we had dared run the risk of meeting Germans. It was likely enough the villagers were so used to *dhows* that they would not trouble to report having seen us in the distance, but it was perfectly certain that, if we paid them a visit, they would pass word along from mouth to mouth with that astonishing, undiscoverable ease that is at once the blessing and bane of African Governments.

So Fred wasted hot hours with the only rifle, trying to hunt meat on a shore where all the four-legged game had been run down by the natives or butchered by the German machine-guns long ago—for, to teach Sudanese mercenaries the art of rapid fire in action, their officers marched them out to practise on herds of antelope. There was game in plenty away from the lake, but none where the German officer could conveniently practise his profession.

We tried to shoot ducks and geese, but a rifle at long range is not the best weapon for that sport. We shot very few and then only to discover the invincible repugnance natives have to eating *dagi*, as they call all birds. We kept ourselves alive, but did not solve the problem of the ever-diminishing supplies of rice for our men.

Somebody thought of fishing. We found hooks in a crevice in the *Queen of Sheba's* bow and made lines from a frayed rope. But, although the shore was lined with traps in which the inhabitants no doubt took fish in proper season, all that we caught was one miserable finny specimen, all head and mouth and tail, that the natives said would poison any one who ate it.

The truth was, of course, that they preferred rice to anything and, African native-like, would eat nothing else as long as rice was to be had, having no earthly notions of economy. When the rice was all gone on the fifth day out of Muanza, they raided a banana plantation before we knew what they were up to and came back gorged, with bunches enough to feed them for two or three more days.

The fat was in the fire then, of course. We paid the owners handsomely, giving them their choice of money or blankets when they bore down on us in long canoes demanding vengeance. They voted for blankets *and* money but vowed they would far rather have the bananas, because now their own people would be on short commons to make up for the surfeit of ours.

WHEN we left, we had no doubt they would send word to the nearest German officer. They told us there was a wood-cutting station within "a few hours," and we prayed there might be only a non-commissioned man in charge of it but knew that prayer was too sweetly reasonable to be answered where the German *Gott* makes war on foreigners. Kazimoto assured us he heard them telling one another they would make complaint against us within the day.

It remained, then, only to guess where that steam-launch might be. We were approaching the northern end of Ukerewe, not a day's sail, if the light wind held, from the narrow mouth of the channel between Ukerewe and the mainland. That was the likeliest place for the launch to lie in wait; it was where we would have waited had we been pursuers and they the pursued.

So we decided after a council of war to put the helm over and sail almost due westward, hoping to meet with an island where we might stop for a few days, catch fish and dry them and calk the leaky *dhow*, without the risk of letting the Germans know our whereabouts. It is a peculiar fact that, whatever the native secret system of transferring messages may be, it does not work across the water.

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An hour after putting up the helm we sighted a school of hippopotami, and for half a day we chased them, Fred trying to shoot one until Will and I objected to further waste of ammunition. A dead hippo would have provided us with meat enough for a month for the whole ship's company. We could have towed the carcass ashore somewhere and dried the meat in slabs.

But the glare on the water made shooting very nearly impossible—Fred's eyes were sore from it—and, if we should meet the Germans, those remaining cartridges would be our only hope. But the diversion took us out of sight of land, and that stood us in better stead presently than tons of fresh meat.

Whether the Germans heard us or were merely quartering that part of the lake in wait, we never knew. Probably they heard the shooting in the distance and gave chase. At any rate, within ten minutes of Fred's last wasted shot Coutlass caught sight of smoke and announced the fact with his favorite oath.

"Gassharramminy! The launch, by ——!"

At first we were all in a stew because there was no land near, where we might have beached the *dhow* and scattered. It was an hour before our advantage of position dawned on us, and all that while the launch approached us leisurely. She had plenty of fuel; the wood was piled high above her gunwale in a stack toward the stern; but those on board her seemed to take more pleasure in contemplation of our defenselessness than in speed. She steamed twice around us slowly before closing in, and then we made out Schillingschen's hairy shape leaning against the cordwood with a rifle between his hands.

"Shoot him! Shoot him, by ——!" urged Coutlass, but Fred was not so "previous" as that.

We were not yet on the defensive. We counted five rifles, in addition to Schillingschen's protruding above the launch's side, and we all took cover in the hope either that they might decide we were not the *dhow* they waited for, or else that they might come very close out of curiosity. For Fred had a plan of his own. Rifle in hand, he crawled under the hot tarpaulin and lay flat on the reed deck, Will crawling after him to snatch the rifle in case Fred should be hit.

"Steer straight toward 'em," Fred called to me as soon as it was evident that the launch did not intend to pass us by. "Keep headed toward them."

That was not easy in the light wind, until Schillingschen tired of staring at us and gave an order to the engineer. Then they laid the launch broadside on to our bow at about two hundred yards range and without a word of warning opened fire on us from all six rifles, Schillingschen devoting his attention to myself at the helm.

Our lone rifle cracked in reply, but they could not see Fred and did not guess where to shoot in order to search him out. They came no nearer but circled slowly around us, only Schillingschen's bullets appearing to come anywhere near the target, until a yell from below showed what their real plan was. Then I understood why the sail was not ripped and no bullets whistled overhead. They were shooting through the planking of the *dhow*, endeavoring to massacre the helpless crowd below.

A wounded Nyamwezi came scrambling on deck, spouting blood from his neck and crazed with fear. He jumped overboard and tried to swim toward the launch, but one of the Germans hit him in the head at the third shot, and he disappeared. Then one of Schillingschen's elephant-bullets slit my sleeve, and the next one pierced my helmet.

"Put one into Schillingschen, Fred!" I shouted, but Fred did not answer.

He kept up a very steady succession of shots that were doing no good at all that I could see.

Another German bullet found its mark below deck in the thigh of the Goanese. He might have known enough to lie quiet, having some alleged white blood in him, but instead he, too, came struggling to the after-deck, bellowing like a madman. Coutlass knocked him back below with a punch on the chin, and he there and then threw the whole crowd into a panic by screaming and kicking. They all began to try to swarm together through the narrow opening, and those in the rear tore at the reed deck.

Into that pandemonium went Coutlass, armed with nothing but Hellenic fury, thoughtful of nothing but his lady-love—surely reckless of his own skin. He beat, kicked, bit, scragged, banged their foolish heads together, cursed, spat, gouged and

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strangled as surely no catamount ever did. Brown leaped into lend a hand, and into the midst of that inferno three more bullets penetrated, each wounding a man.

Lady Waldon, mad with some idiotic strategy of her own sudden devising, seized the tiller and tried to wrench it from my hand. The Syrian, Rebecca, imagining new treachery and fearful for her Greek lover, tried to prevent her with teeth and nails. The Germans raised a war-whoop of wild enjoyment. And just at the height of all that Fred's three-and-twentieth shot went home.

THERE was a loud report, followed by instant stampede on the part of the Germans to get out of reach of something. Then the something grew denser; invisible hot vapor became a pall of steam that hid the launch from view, three more shots from Fred's rifle finding the proper mark by sheer accident, for there was another explosion; the cloud increased, and the launch stopped dead.

"That gray sheet of metal wasn't her boiler at all!" Fred shouted back to me. "The first shot pierced the boiler when I found out where to aim."

"See if you can't get Schillingschen," said I.

But Schillingschen was invisible in the white cloud, and Fred refused to waste one of the half dozen cartridges remaining. The light wind that bore us away from the launch also spread the screen of steam between us and them. A shot or two from Schillingschen's rifle proved him to be alive still and still determined but missed us by so much that we began to dare sit upright. Then Fred went below to sort out wounded men, plug holes in the *dhow* and stop the panic; and we all prayed for wind with a fervor they never exceeded in Nelson's fleet.

When Will had gone below to help Fred, the panic had ceased, two dead men had been thrown overboard and six of the crew had been set to work bailing in deadly earnest to keep ahead of the new leaks, there was time to consider the position and to realize how hugely better off we were than if the launch had caught us somewhere close inshore. Now we could sail safely northward, every puff of wind carrying us nearer to British water and safety, whereas, unless they could mend that high-pressure boiler, they would have to lie there for a week or a month—die unless some one came in search of them. Had we holed their boiler near the shore, they would have been able to take to the land until they found canoes. Good canoes well manned could have overhauled us hand over fist like terriers after a rat.

It was fifteen minutes yet before we were out of rifle-range, and Schillingschen tried to make the most of them when the steam thinned, exposing his beefy carcass recklessly. But, by the time it had thinned down sufficiently to let him really see us, we were too far away to make sure shooting. He slit the sail, giving us half a night's work to mend it, and made three more holes in our planking; but he hurt nobody.

That was the only launch the German Government had on the lake in those days, an almost perfect toy with an aluminum hull and more up-to-date gadgets on her machinery than a battleship's engineer could have explained the purpose of in a watch. They had lavished a whole appropriation on one show. From the minute we were out of range of Schillingschen's big-bore elephant-gun, we ran risk of starvation, and perhaps surprize, but no longer of pursuit; so we headed the *Queen of Sheba* as nearly as we could guess for British East with feelings that even Lady Waldon shared, for she grew distantly polite again and complimented Fred on his cool nerve and accurate shooting.

We should have suspected treachery, for she made no attempt to retaliate on Rebecca for scratching her face. Unnatural inaction should have put us on guard. She even went so far as to compliment the maid on "finding such a great, strong, brave man as Coutlass to cherish her." The Greek simply cooed at that—threw out his great chest and rearranged with his fingers the whiskers that had almost totally disguised him.

Lady Waldon actually began to set her own cap at Coutlass, encouraging him to boast to the porters and pretending to admire the gift with which he told them tales in Kiswahili that would have made even her blush if she had understood the half of them. At intervals the maid grew jealous and had to be kissed back to serenity by Coutlass, who was no less in love with her because of any mere addition to the number of his interests. He could

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have made hot love to six women and have enjoyed it. There were times when he really flattered himself that Lady Waldon admired his looks and fine physique.

Food was now the chief concern. We trailed a fishing-line behind us but caught nothing. When we reached an island whose shore was lined with fish-traps made of stakes and basket-work, we searched all the traps in vain. The natives we saw in the distance all ran away from us, and there were no crops that we could see of any kind.

"Crocks' eggs are what those savages eat, I tell you!" Brown insisted. "They're wholesome and don't taste worse than a rotten hen's egg!"

We offered him his own price if he would eat one himself in the presence of us all, but he refused.

After that first island we began to sail among a regular archipelago, most of them scarcely better than granite rocks on which the crocodiles could crawl to sun themselves, but some of them half a mile long, or longer. Nearly all of them were barren. But at last, when we judged ourselves well inside the British portion of the lake, we came on a very large one that had a mountain in the middle of it and contained a fair-sized village hidden among trees.

IT WAS dark, and we were all famished when we reached it; so, when we had poled the *dhow* into a little bay between granite boulders big enough to hide her, mast and all, we went ashore, made fires and served out the last handfuls of rice, skimping our own allowance to increase those of the porters, whose larger stomachs afforded vaster yearning power. They were pitiably meager rations —a mere jest—an insult to hungry men; but we found, before we had cooked and finished them, that we had witnesses who thought us fortunate.

They came so silently that even the porters did not notice them at first—gaunt, black shadows flitting in the deeper shadows and coming presently to squat outside the edge of the circle of firelight, until a tribe, men, women and little children, were all gathered around us, burning up the darkness with their eyes.

They were hungrier than we! Our food, that looked so scant to us, to them was a very feast of the gods! They all had pieces of leather or plaited grass drawn tight around their middles to lessen the pangs of hunger, and the chief, who sat rather apart from the rest, gnawed at a piece of bark.

None of them wore any clothes. Those who had goatskin aprons had them on behind, and they were as free from self-consciousness as the trees in Winter. Some of them had spears, and they all had knives; yet none offered violence or as much as begged. There were three or four hundred of them, at the lowest reckoning; yet they allowed us to finish our meal in the dark in peace.

There was nothing to say when we had finished. We knew what the matter was, and they knew we knew. We had nothing to share with them, and they knew that, for they could see the empty rice-bags that the porters had shaken and beaten to get out the very dust. We did not know their language; even Kazimoto professed himself ignorant of any dozen words that could unlock their understanding.

Presently, under the eyes of all of them, Fred got out the rifle from its wrappings and proceeded to clean and oil it carefully, as every genuine hunter should before he sleeps.

The chief, uninvited, drew nearer and watched every detail of Fred's husbandry with glittering eyes.

Finally Fred examined the last handful of cartridges carefully one by one and filled the magazine. Then, after making sure the sights were in order, he began to wrap the rifle again. But at that the chief held out a lean, long arm and stopped him. Coutlass sprang to his feet in a hurry, imagining that was a signal to attack at last, but Fred ordered him to sit down, and Lady Waldon, who seemed possessed for the once by uncanny calmness, asked him to give her an arm to the *dhow*, where she proposed to try to sleep. Coutlass felt flattered and obeyed. The maid got up and followed them both in a fury of jealousy, and they three were lost to view in a moment among the shadows cast by our four flickering fires. The other Greek got up and followed them, leaving the Goanese snoozing already by the fire.

Then, just as the half of a brilliantly pale moon rose above the papyrus, the chief came a pace nearer and touched Fred's hand. Then he beckoned. Then he

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touched the hand again and retreated backward. Glancing around, I saw the shadows that were his tribe leaning toward us in strained attention, with eyes for nothing but their chief and Fred. Understanding there was something that the chief desired him to go and do, Fred passed the rifle to Will and rose to his feet.

With patience that was simply pathetic the chief shook his head and tried to explain something in weary-motioned pantomime. Fred took the rifle back from Will. The chief nodded. Fred started to follow him, and then the whole tribe sighed with a sound like the evening wind rustling through the papyrus.

It being clear now that he was to shoot something, Fred took the wrappings off the rifle, threw them to me and walked away rapidly, the chief trotting ahead like a fantom and glancing back to beckon about once a minute. Not caring to miss the play, we followed in Indian file, I bringing up the rear.

The whole tribe arose at once and flitted along beside us on our landward side. We could not hear a footfall or a breath. They passed through dry grass without rustling, governed by one all-absorbing thought. We with our leather boots made more noise than all of them together.

We passed along the lake shore for half a mile, until suddenly the chief, looking tall as a stripped tree in the pale, uncertain light, threw up an arm and waved it in a circle. Instantly the whole tribe vanished as if a puff of wind had blown them. Then the chief continued forward, we marching more carefully.

We approached a low rise, and, as he drew near the top of that, he went down on hands and knees, crawling up the last few yards so cautiously that I had to stare hard to be sure he was there at all.

As soon as Fred came near him, he made frantic signals to him to get down and crawl, too; so we all knelt down and crawled behind Fred, striving to make no noise and filling the unhappy chief so full of fury at the noise we did make that he writhed in nervous torment.

On top of the rise Fred stopped and in imitation of the chief thrust his head forward very gradually. One by one we followed suit until, lying prone in line along the ridge within thirty paces of the water, we saw at last what we were after.

BATHED in the moonlight, head and shoulders clear of the mirror-like water, a great bull hippopotamus surveyed the scenery, drinking in contentment through his little placid eyes—anywhere from three to five tons of meat, less than a hundred yards away, stock-still and unsuspicious!

The chief began whispering unintelligible warnings in a voice so low that it sounded like the drone of insects. Fred thrust the rifle forward inch by inch and settled himself comfortably for the shot. The glare of the sun on the lake had troubled his eyes during the last few days. The shimmer of the moonlight was deceptive now. I wished he would pass the rifle to Will or even to Brown of Lumbwa, who was digging his fingers into the earth beside me in almost uncontrollable excitement. But Fred was unperturbed, and the chief, who was nervous enough to detect the slightest sign of nervousness in Fred, did not seem to mistrust him for one second.

Three times I saw Fred breathe deeply as if about to squeeze the trigger, but each time he was only "makkin' sikkar" and eased his lungs again. The target a hippo offers to a Mauser rifle bullet is not much more than half the size of a man's hand, including only the ear and eye and the narrow space between them. By daylight at a hundred yards that is nothing for a cool shot to complain about, but in half-moon-light at that angle it is none too much.

Over on the water there began to come a wind, driving ripples and little waves in front of it. The moment those came near the hippo he would vanish from view, for they only care for moonlight when they can see it mirrored on a perfectly still surface.

I cursed Fred between set teeth, almost loud enough for him to hear me, for the hippo did move. His head was a foot nearer water-level; he had seen or heard something that alarmed him. He was in the act of sinking under water when Fred made sure of the sights at last and the rifle spoke, ringing out into the still night like the crack of Judgment Day, more startling because we had waited so long for it in such suspense.

Instantly a yell burst out behind us that split the night apart. Where stilly blackness had been, now four or five hundred

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crazy shadows leaped and danced, murdering the silence with marrow-curdling noises intended to express joy.

Out on the water the stricken hippo pitched head-downward and plunged like a mountain of meat gone mad, thrashing up great waves that were darkened with his life-blood. A whole herd, several hundred strong, emerged shoulder-high from the water to take one swift look at him and flee.

Our quarry plunged a last time and stayed under. In a space of time to be measured by seconds the yelling young men of the tribe had uncovered three canoes, hidden from marauding enemies among the more-than-man-high reeds. In twenty minutes after that, with the aid of grass ropes and leather thongs, they had hauled the huge carcass to the shore and rolled it out of water, where it lay glistening in moonlight, stumpy, foolish legs uppermost.

The butcher's work—the feast—did not begin yet. There was time-honored custom to obey, which Kazimoto knew all about even if those ignorant *wachenzie** would have fallen to without ceremony. He drove them off. A white man had slain that animal; therefore the white man's choice of meat was first, and he very leisurely and skilfully cut out the enormous tongue for us and fifty pounds of meat for our following before he would let them as much as touch the carcass with a dagger.

Then, though, the tribe fell to, naked, with little naked knives—tearing off the thick hide in foot-wide strips and hacking the red flesh into lumps that they ate raw and quivering while they worked. The little bits of children, each chewing raw, bloody meat, brought baskets for the overflow, dragging them to wherever they could find a space between the legs of struggling men, the women emptying the baskets almost as fast as the children filled them and chewing until their jaws ran blood.

Nothing was wasted. The blood was caught in pools in part of the hide, spread like an apron on the earth, and lapped up by whoever could get to it. The very guts were gathered up in baskets to be cooked. And, when the last little soft iron dagger had done its work, the blood had been drunk and the last scrap of hide had been cut into strips—to be chewed when the meat and its memory were things of the past—the enormous ribs lay glistening in the moonlight like those of an abandoned wreck, picked as clean as if the kites had done it.

"Have we done a commendable thing?" laughed Fred, looking at the crowd's distended paunches. "There's a good bull hippo the less. We've saved the lives for a time of several hundred gluttons. They know neither grace nor gratitude."

But he was wrong. They did. They brought Fred a woman—their fattest, ugliest; which means she was skin and bone and blown-out belly, but uglier than Want and more afraid of Fred than Satan is said to be of shriving. The chief led her by the hand, she hanging back and hiding her face under one arm—which left the rest of her nakedness unprotected. He seized Fred's hand and put the woman's in it.

"Now you're spliced," Brown explained. "Married to the gal forever in presence of legal witnesses."

Kazimoto confirmed the fearful news.

"Divorce me—soon and swiftly, somebody!" Fred demanded.

We appealed to Kazimoto for information but only threw him into a quandary. In case of divorce, custom decreed that the price paid for the woman should be given back. Food, once eaten, was scarcely returnable.

"Married to the gal for good an' all," Brown grinned. "You'd better stay here an' take the chief's job when he kicks the bucket—possibly you can speed the day by overfeedin' him!"

Interruption came in the form of a weird figure, gesticulating like a windmill, stumbling and careering through the gloom, shouting as it came.

Not until it was thirty yards away did an intelligible sound explain at least who the apparition was.

"Gassharramminy! Give me that gun, by ——!"

COUTLASS burst in among us so out of breath that he could not force through his teeth another rational syllable, but he made his intentions partly clear by snatching at Fred's rifle, persisting until Will and I pulled him off.

"The *dhow*'s gone!" he panted at last.

"You're dreaming or drunk!" Fred answered, but Coutlass refused to be

*Plural of machenzie—"man from 'way back"—"rube"—"simp."

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disbelieved, and in another moment we were all running as fast as we dared through the darkness toward the camp-fires, where we had left the Goanese snoozing and the *dhow* snugly moored among the rocks.

The chief and his followers far outdistanced us in spite of their gorged condition—all except the woman, who jogged dutifully, although unhappily, behind Fred. When we reached the camp-fires, they were standing gazing out on the lake, where we could just make out the bellying sail of the *Queen of Sheba* leaning like a fantom away from the gaining wind. The distance was not to be judged in that weak, uncertain light. We all shouted together, but there came no answer, and we could not tell whether the sound carried as far as the *dhow* or not.

"Gassharramminy! Why in —— don't you shoot?" shouted Coutlass. "Give me that rifle! I'll show you! I'll teach them!"

I believe I would have fired if the rifle had been in my hands. Brown, last to arrive and most out of breath, joined with Coutlass in angry shouts for vengeance. Will offered no argument against sending them a parting shot. Fred set the butt of the rifle down with a determined snort, walked over toward the fire, stirred the embers, threw on more fuel and looked about him when the dry wood blazed.

"If she has left as much as one blanket, I don't see it anywhere!" he said.

"A blanket?" sneered Coutlass. "She has even your money! Worse than that—she has my woman!"

Fred patted the bulging pocket of his shooting-jacket.

"Most of the money is here," he said quietly.

"Take canoes and chase them!" shouted Coutlass.

"There's time enough," Fred answered. "We know the wind of these parts well enough by this time. This will blow until midnight. Then calm until dawn. After dawn a little more wind for an hour or two; then doldrums again until late afternoon. They'll run on a rock in all likelihood. If they don't, we can catch them at our leisure, supposing we can get these islanders to paddle. If it should blow hard, then we can't catch them anyhow. Sit down and tell us what happened, Coutlass."

The Greek cursed and swore and pranced, but all in vain. Fred was inexorable. We others grew calmer when the problem of who should paddle the canoes solved itself suddenly with the arrival of fourteen of our own men. Discovering themselves left behind, they had run along the bank in vain hope of catching the *dhow* somehow—perhaps of swimming through the crocodile-infested water. Will hacked off a lump of meat for them, and they forthwith forgot their troubles as instantly as the birds forget when a sparrow-hawk has done murder down a hedgerow and swooped away.

Not everything was gone after all. Kazimoto found the pots we had cooked the rice in, and he started to boil the hippo's tongue for us.

"Come, Coutlass—sit down before we eat and tell us what happened," Fred suggested.

The Greek paced up and down another time or two and at last calmed himself sufficiently to laugh at Fred's woman, who had squatted down patiently in the shadow behind him.

"Easy for you!" he grinned savagely, squatting on the far side of the fire. "You have a woman. Mine is God knows where. She said to me—that —— —— Lady Saffren Waldon said to me—we sat all three together in the stern of the *dhow*, I with my arm around Rebecca—and she said to me——"

"I'll see if I can't make a dicker for the chief's canoes," Will interrupted. "We can hear the Greek's tale any old time."

"Trade my woman for them!" Fred suggested cheerfully. "Go on, Coutlass!"

The Greek gritted his teeth savagely.

"She said, that —— —— Lady Saffren Waldon said, as we sat there in the *dhow:* 'How about the way they treated you in Muanza, Mr. Coutlass? Where is your Greek honor?' Do you see? She worked on my bodily bruises and my spiritual courage at the same time—the cunning hussy! 'That Fred Oakes will win this Rebecca away from you very soon!' she went on. 'I have watched him!' "

Fred smiled about as comfortably as a martyr on the grid. The presence of the dusky damsel, confirmed by her smell from behind him, made him touchy on the subject of sex.

"Presently she said to me: 'They will simply report you to the authorities in British East for raiding those cattle of Brown's. Can you imagine that creature,

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Brown, forgiving you? He will have you thrown in jail. You go,' she said, 'and send the Goanese and the rest of the porters on board!'

"So I did go. I kicked de Sousa awake, and he cursed me, because my toe landed once or twice on his thigh where the bullet wounded him. I drove him on board, and she put him to work with Kamarajes getting up the sail. Then I went off to find those cursed porters. I could not find them. The dogs had gone to the village—to find women, I don't doubt.

"I decided to leave them behind, and serve them right. I went back to the *dhow* in a great hurry. She was gone! I could just see the sail in the distance. I shouted. No answer. I shouted again. I heard Rebecca call to me!

"Then I heard laughter—Lady Isobel Saffren Waldon's laughter! Gassharramminy! —— ——! I will run red-hot skewers into that woman when I catch her! Do you see how she has vengeance on Rebecca? Do you see now why she took sides between me and Kamarajes and de Sousa? Do you see how she has plotted? What will she do now? What will she do?"

HE BEGAN to pace up and down again furiously, shaking both fists at the unresponsive stars.

"She will do Rebecca an injury! She will give that girl to de Sousa or to that pig, Kamarajes! We shall never catch them! Gassharramminy! ———! You should have fired when I told you! That she-dog has a trick of some kind up her sleeve yet! How shall we catch her? Why do we wait? Give me that rifle! I will take a canoe and go after them alone! You do not know what Greek spirit is! I am American sometimes—English when it suits me—always Greek when I am wronged!"

"You certainly have been put upon," Fred answered. "Tell us how your Greek spirit justified deserting us!"

"Why not?" snarled Coutlass. "Do you love me? What would you do to me if you could get me to British East in your power? You would hand me over as a cattle-thief!"

"You bet I will," admitted Brown of Lumbwa.

"What did I tell you?" demanded Coutlass.

"I think we'd better leave you on this island," Fred told him quietly.

"You will leave me here?" he stammered.

Fred nodded, smiling up at him.

"You see, you're such an all-in scoundrel," Brown assured him.

"You! You poor drunkard!" Coutlass turned his back on Brown and faced Fred squarely. "You are a man, Mr. Oakes. I can speak to you as to my brother."

Fred smiled blandly.

"I will speak to you God's truth!"

Fred grinned.

"I will tell you where that ivory is!"

Fred threw his head back and laughed outright.

"I speak to you on my honor! That —— —— she-dog, Lady Saffren Waldon, stole a map from Schillingschen. Before I would agree to set the town on fire, I made her give me that for a hostage, lest she should prove treacherous and leave me behind, after all. I have it now. It is marked with a circle to show where Schillingschen believes the stuff must be, because he has searched everywhere else!"

"If that map is worth anything," Fred countered, "how did Lady Saffren care to leave you behind with it?"

"The she-dog forgot it!" answered Coutlass. "She was so delighted to get vengeance on Rebecca by deserting me that she did not care for anything else! She hates you! She hates me! She hates Rebecca! Those who hate—as I can hate—would rather have revenge than all the riches of Africa! Do you think I would hesitate between money and revenge on her?"

"All right," Fred answered. "The map then—what about it?"

"Take me with you, and the map is yours!"

"Show it to me, then!"

"I must have a share of the ivory!"

"Show me the map first?"

Coutlass searched inside his flannel shirt—swiftly—more swiftly—angrily. His jaw dropped. Even between the firelight and the moonlight one could judge that his color changed—and changed again.

"Show me the map before we bargain!" Fred insisted. "Hurry, man! There's Mr. Yerkes with the canoes. We can't wait here all night!"

"It is gone!" admitted Coutlass. "Some one stole it!"

"I could have told you that in the first place," Fred informed him, rising to his feet. "I have the map in my pocket."

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"You stole it?" Coutlass gasped.

"Certainly not. Rebecca stole it while she was supposed to be sleeping in your arms!"

"Gassharramminy! The slut! I might have known it! Those Syrians—she meant to give us all the slip and find the ivory herself!"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Fred. "She stole it from you to give it to Lady Saffren Waldon! Kazimoto saw her do it—saw where Lady Waldon hid it—and stole it from her while she slept. He gave it to me, believing it to be something of mine. Here it is!"

Fred let the end of a folded map protrude from his inner pocket just far enough for Coutlass to recognize it by the fire-light. The Greek turned on his heel.

"All right," he said ruefully, swinging suddenly round again. "If you were alone, I would fight you, my knife against your rifle. I can not fight all four of you. Go away then, and be —— to you! I have nothing to offer. There is nothing I can do. Leave me, and I will look after myself!"

"Now you're talking like a man," said Fred.

"Leave me that woman of yours and go to ——, all of you!" laughed the Greek.

Fred seemed suddenly possessed of a bright idea. He turned to the woman and beckoned her to rise. Then in unmistakable pantomime he went through the motions of presenting her to Coutlass. The woman gasped—stammered—stared with frightened eyes at Coutlass—shook her shaven head violently—and ran away into the darkness, pursued by roars of laughter that speeded her on her way.

"A clear case of desertion," announced Fred judicially. "You men are witnesses." Then he turned once more to Coutlass. "I don't think we'll leave you to raise Cain on this island. It depends on you whether we find you a lonelier island—turn you loose—or hand you over to the authorities in British East!"

"Good!" Coutlass shouted. "By ——, you are a gentleman! You are the best man in the world. I will treat you as my brother."

"Aren't you men ever coming?" asked Will, striding out of the shadows. "I've found a man who'd been on the mainland and knows Kiswahili. The chief's agreeable to loan us two canoes in place of deeding you the woman. I took your name in vain, Fred, and consented to that while your back was turned. Kick all you like—the deed is done. Four of his savages come with us as far as we want to go, we feeding 'em meat and paying 'em money. It is agreed they're to eat just as often as we do. They paddle the canoes back home when we're through with them. Are you all ready? Then all aboard. Let's hurry."

XII

When the last of the luck has deserted and the least of the chances has waned;
When there's nowhere to run to and even the pluck in the smile that you carry is feigned;
When grimmer than yesterday's horror tomorrow dawns hungry and cold,
And your faith in the coming unknown is denied in regret for the known and the old—
Then you're facing, my son, what the fathers from Abraham down to today
Have looked on alone and stood up to alone, and each in his several way
O'ercame (or he shouldn't be father). So ye shall o'ercome: while ye live,
Though ye've nothing but breath and good-will to your name, ye must stand to it naked and give!

Ye shall learn in that hour that the plunder ye won by profession is naught—
And false was the aim ye aspired with—and dross was the glamour ye sought—
The codes and the creeds that ye cherished were shadows of clouds in the wind.
(And ye can not recall for their counsel lost leaders ye dallied behind!)
Ye shall stand in that hour and discover by agony's guttering flame
How virtue of self and black bitterness drunk in the dark are the same,
Until, stripped of desire, ye shall know that was death. Then the proof that ye live
Shall be knowledge new-born that the naked—the fools and the felons—can give!

Then the suns and the stars in their courses shall speedily swing to your aid,
And nothing shall hinder you further, and nothing shall make you afraid,
For the veriest edges of evil shall challenge your joy, and no more,
And room for the right shall shine clear in your vision where wrong was before.
Then the stones in the road shall be restful that used to be traps for your feet;
Then the crowd shall be kind that was cruel before, and your solitude sweet
That was wont to be gloomy aforetime and gray—when the proof that ye live
Is no longer the pain of desire, but the will—and the wit—and the vision to give!

"Many That Are First Shall Be Last; and the Last First."

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THERE is one inevitable, invariable way of starting on a journey by canoe in Africa. Somebody pushes off. The naked paddlers, seated at intervals down either side, strain their toes against a thwart or a rib. The leading paddler yells, and off you go with a swing and a rhythmic thunder as they all bring their paddles hard against the boat's side at the end of each stroke. Fifty—sixty—seventy—perhaps a hundred strokes they take at top speed, and the passenger settles down to enjoy himself, for there is no more captivating motion in the world. Then suddenly they stop, and all begin arguing at top of their lungs. Unless the passenger is a man of swift decision and firm purpose, there is frequently a fight at that stage, likely to end in overturned canoes and an adventure among the crocodiles.

Our voyage broke no precedents. We started off in fine style, feeling like old-time emperors traveling in state; and within ten minutes we were using paddles ourselves to poke and beat our men into understanding of the laws of balance, they abusing one another while the canoes rocked and took in water.

It was only the first mile that as much as suggested enjoyment. Never accustomed to much paddling in any case, our own men had suffered from hunger and confinement in the reeking hot *dhow*. Then, hippo meat needs hours of cooking to be wholesome—our own share of it was still in the pot, waiting to be boiled more thoroughly at the next halting-place. They had merely toasted their tough lumps in the camp-fire embers and gobbled it. The result was a craving for sleep, noisily seconded by the chief's four men, who had eaten the stuff without cooking at all and in enormous quantities.

That night until nearly morning we fretted at every rest the paddlers took—drove them unmercifully—ran risks of overturning on the slippery shoulders of partly submerged rocks—took long turns ourselves to relieve the weary men, Coutlass working harder than the rest of us.

It would have been a bad night's work if we had overhauled the *dhow* and loosed him to do his will.

"Think of the slut!" he kept shouting to the night at large. "Lying in the arms of Georges Coutlass, kissing and being kissed, simply to rob him—Coutlass—me! Think of it! Only think of it!

"Wait though! Nobody ever turned a trick on Georges Coutlass more than once! Wait till we catch them! See what I do to them! I don't forget Kamarajes, either, nor that bastard, de Sousa, also pretending they were friends of mine! *Heiah!* Hurry! Drive the paddles in, you lazy black men!"

A little before morning, at about that darkest hour when the stars have seen the coming sun but the world is not yet aware of it, Fred called to us to turn in toward a barren-looking hill of granite that rose almost sheer out of the water but at one corner offered a shelving landing-place. There we all clambered out to stretch cramped muscles and make a fire to cook the hippo's tongue, Coutlass cursing us for letting what he called idleness come between us and revenge.

Kazimoto had scarcely more than gathered an armful of wood, thrown it down and gone to hunt for more; one of the other boys had struck a match, and the first little flicker of crimson fire and purple smoke was starting to curl skyward, when Fred jumped on it and stamped it out.

"Silence!" he ordered. "Keep still, every one!"

We could not see at first which way he was staring through the darkness. It was sound, not sight, that gave me the first clue. There came a purring from the lake, and, when I had searched for a minute for the source of it, I saw the telltale crimson stain on the dark that rides above a steamer's funnel.

"It can't be the German launch," said I.

"Why not?" demanded Fred irritably.

He knew I knew it was the German launch as certainly as he did.

"How can they have patched her boiler?" I asked.

"How many beans make five? They've done it, and there she goes. That's the German launch and Schillingschen as surely as we stand here."

WE WAITED there until dawn, arguing at intervals, not daring to light a fire nor caring to sleep, Coutlass sitting apart and laughing every now and then like a hyena.

"If the men weren't so dead beat I'd be for carrying on," said Fred.

"What's the use?" argued Brown. "We can't catch the bally launch, can we?"

"I'd say follow them if the men could make it," Will agreed. "But what's the

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odds? It's us they're after. They'll dare do nothing to the women on the *dhow*—in British waters."

"That's so," I agreed, not believing a word of it any more than they.

One had to calm one's feelings somehow.

Coutlass, who had heard every word of the argument, burst out into such yells of laughter that Fred threw a rock at him.

"Curse you, you ghoul!"

"They will do nothing, eh? It is I, Georges Coutlass, who need do nothing. I have my revenge by proxy. Wait and see."

Fred let the boys light a fire when the sun had risen high enough to make the little blaze not noticeable. Most of the men were asleep, but, though our eyes ached with the long vigil, we could not have copied them. About three hours after daylight we breakfasted off slices of hot boiled hippo tongue and tepid lake water, without salt or condiments of any kind. And, with discontent increased by that unpleasing feast, we aroused the boys and drove them into the canoes.

We forced the pace again and picked up smoke on the sky-line an hour before noon, but it was not from a steamer's funnel. It was lazy, flat-flowing, spreading smoke with a look of iniquity about it that sent our hearts to our mouths. We paddled toward it with frenzied energy, and, long before any of us could make out details, Coutlass, standing balancing himself amidships, told us what we knew was true and flatly refused to believe.

"It's the *Queen of Sheba* burning to the water-line!"

"Sit down, you fool, or you'll upset us!"

"She's gutted already—the flame is about finished! Nothing now but smoke!"

"Sit down, you lying idiot, and hold your tongue!"

"I can see the smoke of the German launch now. Don't you all see it? Straight ahead beyond the smoke of the *dhow*. They've burned the *dhow* and steamed away. I'll bet you a million pounds they've killed everybody—shot 'em or burned 'em alive or drowned 'em!"

"Did you hear me tell you to sit down? I'll tip you overboard and make you swim for shore—d'ye see those crocodiles? Ugh! Look at the brutes! In you go among the crocks if you don't sit down at once."

Coutlass took no notice of the threat but rocked the canoe recklessly as he stood on tiptoe.

"Think of their gall! By ——, they're steaming for British East. I bet you five million pounds to a kick on the rump they think they've drowned the lot of us. They're going to steam in and report the accident!"

We got him to sit down at last by ordering the paddlers nearest him to throw him overboard, but nothing would stop his evil croaking—any more than flat refusal to admit the truth of what he gloated over lessened our real conviction.

Long before we reached the *dhow*, there was no room left for unbelief. The stern planks were charred but stood erect, unburned yet, and the blue-and-white paint smeared on them was surely that of the *Queen of Sheba*. When we came within fifty yards, the water was full of loathsome reptiles; our paddles actually struck them as they swarmed after the prey, snapping at one another and at our canoes—long, slimy-looking monsters, as able to smell carrion in the distance as kites are to see.

There were garments on the water—blankets—and one soaked, torn, lacy thing that certainly had been a woman's. More than a dozen crocodiles fought around that. We tried to go close enough to see whether there were dead bodies in the *dhow's* charred hull, but, as if the very ripple from our paddles were the last straw, the wreck dipped suddenly ten feet from us and plunged, the crocodiles following it down into deep water with lashing tails—swifter than fish.

We paddled about for an hour in the blistering sun, searching stupidly for what we knew we could never find; crocodiles remove traces of identity more swiftly than kites and crows.

"I'll bet you they thought we were on board!" gleed Coutlass. "I'll bet you they opened fire, and, when we didn't answer, came to the conclusion we had no ammunition. Then they steamed close enough to throw kerosene on board and light it! I bet you they steamed round and round and watched the people jump as the flames drove them overboard. Or d'you think they shot them all and then threw them overboard and fired the *dhow?*

"No—then they'd have known we weren't on the *dhow;* they'd have steamed back then to find us. They thought we were in the *dhow.* They thought we were hiding below deck. They're going to British East to take their Bible oaths they saw us burn and drown. Isn't that a joke? Isn't that a

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good one? Gassharramminy! But I'd give my hope of heaven to know whether they shot the women first or watched them jump among the crocodiles when the heat grew fierce!"

WE PADDLED to another rocky island—one that had trees on it—and rested through the heat of the day when we had killed all the snakes that had forestalled us in the shade. There, after again eating hippo tongue unseasoned and ungarnished, we held a council of war, and Fred produced the map that Rebecca had stolen from Coutlass.

"If we make for a township now—Kisumu is the nearest—about five-and-twenty miles away," said Fred, "we can give ourselves the pleasure of surprizing Schillingschen, and, of course, we can get a square meal and some clothes and soap and so on—incidentally perhaps some rifles and ammunition. But we can't prove a thing against Schillingschen, and he has enough pull with British officials to make things deucedly unpleasant for us, for a time at least.

"Consider the other side of it. Suppose we don't make for a station. Schillingschen reports us dead. Nobody looks for us—unless perhaps out on the lake for a hat or some scrap of clothing by way of corroborative evidence. Suppose we paddle out of this gulf and take to shore somewhere along the north end of the lake. We've no food, no tents, only one gun, next to no ammunition—nothing but money and a purpose. We don't know what chance we have of getting new supplies, and particularly rifles, without letting any one know where we are, but we do know we've a clear field and a straight mark for Elgon, where rumor says—and Courtney said—and Schillingschen thinks—and this map says—the ivory ought to be!

"The odds are against us—climate—starvation—wild beasts—savages—last and not least the Government, if they ever get wind of our being beyond bounds. Are we willing to take the chance, or are we not?"

We talked it over for an hour, Coutlass listening all ears to most of what we said, although we drove him to the farthest limit of the shade trees. We were in two minds whether or not it mattered if he listened, and we made the usual two-minds hash of it. Finally we put it to a vote, letting Brown have a voice with the rest of us. He was in favor of anything that offered prospect of a gamble, and we remembered the letter in code we had given the missionary to mail to Monty. We had told him in that that we should make tracks for Elgon, and we all voted the same way.

It was then that Georges Coutlass took a hand in the game again. He came striding through the trees with something of his old swagger and sat down among us with an air.

"Count me in," he demanded.

"D'you mean in the lake?" suggested Fred.

"I'm on the trip to Mount Elgon!"

"We've had nearly enough of you," Fred answered. "I know what's coming. If you don't come with us, you'll tell tales? Blackmail, eh? Well, it won't work!"

But Coutlass was impurturbable for once. He laid a hand on Fred's knee, and changed his tone to one of gentle persuasion between friend and friend.

"Ah! Mr. Oakes, I know you now too well! You are not the man to leave me in the lurch. These others, perhaps. You never! You know me, too. You have seen me under all conditions. You are able to judge my character. You know how firm a friend I can be, as well as how savage an enemy. You know I would never be false to a friend such as you—to a man whom I admire as I do you."

Will Yerkes, who had tried to keep a straight face, now went off into peals of laughter, rolling over on his back and rocking his legs in the air—a performance that did not appear to discourage Coutlass in the least. Brown was far from amused. He advised throwing the Greek into the lake.

"Remember those cattle o' mine," he insisted.

"Yes," agreed Coutlass. "Remember those cattle. Consider what a man of quick decision and courage I am. How useful I can be. What a forager! What a guide! What a fighting man! What a hunter! What a liar on behalf of my friends! What a danger for my friends' enemies! What are the cattle of a drunkard like Brown—the poor unhappy sot—compared to the momentary needs of a gentleman?

"Ah! By ——! I am a gentleman, and that is the secret of it all. You, Mr. Oakes, as one brave gentleman, can not despise the right hand of friendship of Georges Coutlass,

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another gentleman. I know you can not! You haven't it in you. You were born under another star than that. I have confidence. I sit contented."

"You good-for-nothing villain!" Fred grinned. "I'll take you at your word!"

Brown of Lumbwa gasped, the very hairs of his red beard bristling.

"I knew you would!" said Coutlass calmly. "These others are not gentlemen. They do not understand."

"If your word is good for anything," Fred continued.

"My word is my bond," said the Greek.

"And you really want to prove yourself my friend——"

"I would go to —— for you and bring you back the devil's favorite wife!"

"Then we'll set you on the mainland to go and recover those cattle of Mr. Brown's from the Masai who raided them. Return them to Lumbwa, and I'll guarantee Brown shall shake hands with you."

And so the matter was left for the present, with Georges Coutlass under sentence of abandonment to his own devices as soon as we could do that without entailing his starvation. We had no right to have pity for the rascal; he had no claim whatever on our generosity; yet I think even Brown would not have consented to deserting him on any of those barren islands, whatever the risk of his spoiling our plans as soon as we should let him out of sight.

FROM then until we beached the canoes at last in a gap in the papyrus on the lake's northern shore, we pressed forward like hunted men. For one thing, the very thought of boiled meat without bread, salt or vegetables grew detestable even to the natives after the second or third meal—although hippo tongue is good food.

However, we were not noticeably better off when we first set foot on shore. There was nothing but short grass growing on the thin soil that only partly hid the volcanic rock. Victoria Nyanza is the crater of a once-enormous, long-ago extinct volcano, and we stood on a shelf of rock about three thousand feet below what had been the upper rim—a chain of mountains leading away toward the north, higher and higher, until they culminated in Mount Elgon, another extinct volcano fourteen thousand feet above sea-level.

It was not unexplored land where we stood, but it was so little known that the existence of white men was said to be a matter of some doubt among natives a mile or two to either side of the old *safari* route that passed from East to West. We could see no villages although we marched for hours, the loaned canoe-men tagging along behind us hungrier than we, until at last over the back of a long, low spur we spied the tops of growing Kaffir corn.

We seized the heads of grain, rubbed them between our hands and had munched our fill before we were seen by the jealous owners. A small boy, herding humpbacked cattle down the valley, watched us for a minute and then deserted his charge to report to the village hidden behind a clump of trees. Ten minutes after that we were surrounded by naked black giants, all armed with spears and a personal smell that outstank one's notions of Gehenna.

We had nothing to offer them, except money—for which they obviously had not the slightest use. None of us knew their language. From their point of view we were thieves taken in the act, all but one of us unarmed as far as they knew, to be judged by the tribal standard that for more centuries than men remember has decreed the thief shall die. They were most incensed at the four unhappy islanders, probably on the same principle that dogs pick on the weakest and fight most readily with dogs of a more or less similar breed.

It was Coutlass who saved that situation. He instantly went crazy or the next thing to it, wrinkling up his sparsely black-whiskered face into a caricature, yelling a Greek monologue in a refrain consisting of five notes repeated over and over, dancing around in a wide ring with one leg shorter than the other and his arms executing symbols of witchcraft.

The chief was the biggest man—not an inch less than seven feet—black as ebony, from the curly hair into which his patient wives had plaited fiber to hang in a greasy lump over his neck, all down his naked body to the soles of his enormous feet. Each time he came in front of that individual, Coutlass paused and executed special finger movements, like the trills of a super-pianist, ending invariably in a punctuation point that made the savage shiver.

The fifth time round, to avoid the accusing fingers, the giant dodged behind a

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smaller man, who dodged behind a woman, who promptly turned and ran, swinging in the wind behind her a bustle like a horse's tail that was her only garment. Her flight was the touch that settled the decision in our favor. We all began to do a mumbo-jumbo dance around Coutlass, and in five seconds more the whole armed party were in full retreat, holding their spears behind them as some sort of protection against magic.

"After that," said Coutlass proudly, "will you still dismiss me from your party, gentlemen?"

"You've got to go and find Brown's cattle and return them to him," Fred answered firmly.

But we none of us felt like sending him packing until he was better fed and some provision could be made for his safety on the road. It was wonderful, the number of excuses that flocked through my mind for befriending the ruffian, and later on I found it was the same with Fred and Will. Brown, on the other hand, affected indignation at his being allowed to go with us another yard.

"Make a rope o' grass an' hang the swine!" he grumbled.

We decided to march on the village. Sleep another night in the open among the mosquitoes was likely to bring us all down with fever.

We preferred the thought of fever to the loneliness, for man is unlike all other nomads, and that is why the dog takes kindly to him; he must have a home of his own—a portable one, if you will—a tub like Diogenes—a Bedouin's tent—a cave or a hole in the ground—something so he may rent it or own it and know for a fact he may sleep there when night comes. Life in the open is only good fun when there is cover to take to at will.

All the way along the winding foot-track, leading in every imaginable direction except toward the village and only turning suddenly toward it when we had grown disgusted and decided to leave it and try to find another, Brown kept pointing out trees with suitable overhanging arms to which we might hang Coutlass. The Greek, with eyes for nothing but the fat, humpbacked village cattle in the distance, seemed to think only of them, until Will commented on the fact and Fred saw fit to drop a hint.

"Steal as much as a young calf, Coutlass, and we'll let Brown choose the tree! Try it once if you don't believe me."

THE villagers closed their gate against us by dragging great piles of thorn across the gap in the rough palisade, but, as Coutlass pointed out, they would have to open it up again to let the cattle in before dark; so we sat down and ate the remaining fragments of the hippo tongue—no ambrosia by that time; it had to be eaten to save it from utter waste!

Then Coutlass did a first-class devil-dance, backward and forward this time before the gate, putting genius into it and fear into the hearts of the defenders. Kazimoto helped even more than he by discovering a native within the palisade who could speak a common tongue.

The villagers held a very noisy council on their side of the thorn obstruction, under the apparent impression that it was sound-proof and bullet-proof. It was beginning to be pretty obvious that a man who advised volleying through the crevices with spears was winning the argument when Kazimoto detected familiar accents and raised his voice. After that the barricade was dragged aside within ten minutes, and we entered, if not in honor, at least in temporary safety.

Luxury is a question of contrast. That evening in a hut assigned to us by the chief, squatting on the trodden cow-dung floor, leaning against the dried-mud sides, with a little fire of sticks in the midst to give us light and keep mosquitoes at a distance at the expense of almost unbearable heat, we ate porridge made from *mtama*, as they call their Kaffir corn, and washed it down with milk—good rich cows' milk, milked by Kazimoto into our own metal pot and not into their unwashed gourds. Lucullus never dined better.

The feast was only rather spoiled by two things: we all had chiggers in our feet—the fleas that haunt the dust of native villages and insert themselves under toe-nails to grow great and lay their eggs. And the chief felt obliged to insert his smelly presence among us and ask innumerable idiotic questions through the medium of his interpreter and Kazimoto. He received some astonishing answers but would not have been satisfied with anything more reasonable. We wanted him satisfied and gave our interpreter free rein.

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The main trouble was we had nothing of value to offer him. Money was something he had no knowledge of. He wanted beads of a certain size and color; for two handfuls of them he expressed himself willing to be our friend for life. We had to educate him about money, and Kazimoto assured him that the silver rupees Fred produced from a bag were so precious that Governments went to war to get them away from other Governments.

But the impression still prevailed that we were *wasikini*—poor men, and that is a fatal qualification in the savage mind.

"Why have you only one gun?"

In vain Kazimoto assured him we had dozens of guns "at home"—that Fred's landed possessions were so vast that two hundred strong men walking for a month would be unable to march across them—that Fred's wives—Fred seemed to live under a sort of sexual hoodoo in those days—were so many in number they had to be counted twice a day to make sure none were missing.

The chief had eighteen wives of his own to show. He could prove his matrimonial felicity. Why had Fred left his behind? How did he dare? Who looked after them? Had he left the guns behind to guard the women? Why did such a rich man travel without food for his men? The chief had seen us with his own eyes devour porridge as if we were starving.

To have told him the truth would have been worse than useless. To have mentioned such a thing as shipwreck would only have stirred the savage instinct to prey off all unfortunates. Failing absolute evidence of wealth in our possession, the only feasible plan was to claim so much that he might believe some of it, and it was Coutlass, drawing a bow at a venture, who ordered Kazimoto to tell him that we expected a party in a few days bringing tents, provisions and more guns.

"There will be blue-and-white beads of the sort you long for among those loads," added Kazimoto on his own account, and that eased the chief's mind for the night. Fred gave him a half-rupee and promised him to exchange it, when the loads should come, for as many of the beads as he could seize in his two fists. The chief went out to brag to the village, opening and closing his fists to see how huge their compass was; and later that night his wives had to be beaten for fighting. They were jealous because the fattest and the youngest new one had both been promised double shares.

The chief entered our hut next morning disposed to hold us up for double promises of beads. It was evident we had to deal with a born extortioner. He would increase his demands with every fresh concession.

"Oh, what's the odds?" laughed Coutlass. "Promise him anything. The only loads likely to come along this way for a year or two are Schillingschen's."

FRED told the chief he would think the matter over and chased him out of the hut. Coutlass had given us all a new idea in an instant, and he was the only one who did not see its point—he, the only one who did not give a snap of the fingers for the laws of any land!"

"D'you suppose——"

"Too good to hope for!"

"If he thinks we're dead——"

"And if he believes in that map——"

"He'll not need the map. He'll have memorized it. There's only a circle drawn on it to mark the Elgon district. All the old pencil-marks have been rubbed out as he searched the other likely places and drew them all blank."

"He'll travel without military escort?"

"Sure. He won't want witnesses. He'll make believe it's a scientific trip. Remember, he's a professor of ethnology. That's how he puts it all over the British and goes where he pleases without as much as by-your-leave."

"Say, fellows, it's a moral cinch that, when we broke away from Muanza, he made up his mind in a flash to return to British East and destroy us on the way. He thinks he made a clean job of that. I'll bet he loaded the launch down with stuff for a long *safari* and thinks now he has a clear run and can take his time!"

"If that's how the cards lie, the game's ours!"

Coutlass saw the point at last and offered himself on the altar of forgiveness and friendship.

"Make me your partner, gentlemen, and, if he travels within a hundred miles of this, I will crawl into that Schillingschen's tent in the night and slit his throat. I would murder him as willingly as I eat when I am hungry."

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"Your job has been assigned you," answered Fred. "When Mr. Brown's cattle are back in Lumbwa, perhaps we'll give you something else to do."

Nevertheless, Coutlass had outlined in a flash the limits of the plan. We would draw the line at murdering even Schillingschen but must help ourselves to his outfit as our only chance of reoutfitting without betraying our presence in British East. But the plan was not without rat-holes in it that a fool could see.

"Schillingschen's boys will escape and run to the nearest British official with the story."

"And the British official will be so full of the importance of Schillingschen and the need of protecting his beastly carcass—to say nothing of the everlasting disgrace of letting him be scoughed on British territory—and the official reprimand from home that's sure to follow—that he'll come hot-foot to investigate!"

"We'll have to provide against that," said Fred, and we all laughed, including Coutlass.

Talk of provision is easy when you have no means out of which to provide. It did not occur to us to include Coutlass in the calculations or to dismiss him from them; but, without exchanging any remarks on the subject, it was clear enough to all of us that no such plan could hope to succeed with the Greek at large, at liberty to spoil it. We saw we should have to keep him in our party for the present.

"Don't forget," said Coutlass, more accustomed than we to seizing the strategic points of desperate situations, "that Schillingschen will have his own boys with him from German East."

"I didn't see any with him on the launch," I objected.

"He would never have come without them," Coutlass insisted. "He made them lie below the water-line out of reach of bullets at the only time when you might have seen them. He wouldn't trust himself to British porters. By ——, no! That devil knows the ropes. He knows some of them might be British Government spies! He'll have his own boys—if they can't carry all his loads, he'll buy donkeys at Mumias; there are always donkeys to be bought at that place, brought down from Turkana by the Arab ivory traders. Do donkeys talk?"

At any rate, we talked and made no bones at all about including Georges Coutlass in the conversation. It was his suggestion that we should send natives to look out for Schillingschen, and Fred's amendment that reduced the messengers to one and that one Kazimoto. Any of the others might decide to desert, once out of sight, and we could scarcely have blamed them, for their path had not lain among roses in our company.

Kazimoto had a million objections to offer against going alone on that errand, as for instance that the chigger-fleas would invade our toe-nails disastrously without his cunning fingers to hunt them out again. He also prophesied that, without him to interpret, there would swiftly be trouble between us and the chief; but we saw the other side of that medal and rather looked forward to an interval when the chief would not be able to talk with us at all.

AT LAST, on the second morning after our arrival at the village, Kazimoto wrapped an enormous mound of cold *mtama* pudding in a cloth and went his way, prophesying darkly of murder and sudden death lurking behind rocks and trees, as unwishful to be alone as a terrier without a master—but much too faithful to refuse duty.

The chief saw a side of the medal that we had not guessed existed. He came and sat beside us like an evil-smelling shadow, satisfied that now we could not dismiss him, he being under no obligation to understand gestures. Curiosity was the impelling motive, but he was not without suspicion. Fred said he reminded him of a Bloomsbury landlady whose lodgers had not paid their board and rooming in advance.

Will solved that problem by taking the rifle and one cartridge that Fred doled out grudgingly and, after a long day's stalking among mosquitoes in the papyrus at the edge of the lake five miles away, at imminent risk of crocodiles and an even worse horror we had not yet suspected, shooting a hippopotamus. Forthwith the whole village, chief included, went to cut up and carry off the meat. There followed revelry by night, the chief's wives brewing beer from the *mtama*, and all getting drunk as well as gorged. Coutlass and Brown got more drunk than any one.

Will came back with flies on his coat—three large things like horse-flies, that crossed their wings in repose, resembling

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in all other respects the common tsetse fly. He said the reeds by the lake side were full of them.

Remembering tales about sleeping sickness and suspicion of conveying it said to rest on a tsetse fly that crossed its wings, I went out the following day and walked many miles eastward, taking with me the only two sober villagers I could find. They came willingly enough for five miles, thinking, I suppose, that I intended to follow Will's example and kill some more meat—although, as I did not take the rifle with me, they were not guilty of much dead-weight reasoning.

At the bank of the fifth stream we came to, they stopped and refused to go another yard. Thinking they were merely lusting after the meat and beer in the village, I took a stick to drive them across the stream in front of me, but they dodged in terror and ran back home as if the devil had been after them.

I crossed the stream and continued forward alone about another mile toward a fairly large village visible between great blue boulders with cactus dotted all about. There was the usual herd of cattle grazing near at hand, but the place had an unaccountable forlorn look, and the small boy, standing on an ant-hill to watch the cattle, seemed too listless to be curious and too indifferent to run away.

The big, brown tsetse flies, that crossed their wings when resting, were everywhere, making no noise at all but announcing themselves every once in a while by a bite on the back of the hand that stung like a whip-lash. They seemed to have special liking for coat sleeves, and a dozen of them were generally riding on each side of me. One could drive them off, but they came back at once as horse-flies do when poked off with a whip.

When I drew near the village, nobody came out to look at me, which was suspicious in itself. Nobody shouted. Nobody blocked the way or dragged thorn-bushes across the gateway. There were black men and women there, sitting in the shadows of the eaves, who looked up and stared at me—men and women too intent on sitting still to care whether their skins were glossy—unoiled, unwashed, unfed by the look of them—skeletons clothed in leather and dust, desiring death but cruelly denied it.

One man, thin as a whisp of smoke, rushed at me from the shadow of a hut door and tried to bite my leg. The merest push sent him reeling over, and there he lay, too overcome by inertia to move another inch, his arm uplifted in the act of self-defense. Nobody else in the village stirred. There were more huts than people, more kites on the roofs than huts.

Some of the littlest children played in the hut doors, but nearly all of them were listless like the grown folk. The only sign of normal activity was the big black earthern jars that witnessed that the women performed part at least of their daily round by bringing water from the lake.

I returned late that afternoon, walking, as it were, out of a belt of tsetse flies. On one side of a narrow stream they were thick together; to the west of it there were scarcely any, although the wind blew from east to west.

"There's no fear of news about us reaching any Government official," I announced. "There's a curtain of death between us and the Government that even suspicion couldn't penetrate!"

XIII

Ten were the plagues that Israel fled, and leaving left no cure,
Whose progeny self-multiplied a million-fold remain,
The cloak of each one ignorance; idolatry its lure,
And death the goal till, clarion-called, lost Israel come again.
Till then that loaded lash that bade the tale of bricks increase
(Eye for an eye, and limb for limb!) shall fail not though ye weep;
The conqueror's heel for Africa! The fear that shall not cease!
Desire, distrust, the alien law! The sleep that is no sleep!

The Sleep That Is No Sleep.

KAZIMOTO was gone five days and then came preceded by proof of the news he brought. He came in the evening. In the morning, unaccountably from the northward, avoiding the regular *safari* route and the belt of sleeping sickness villages, there came a genial, sleek, shiny Baganda, arrayed in khaki coat, red fez and bordered loin-cloth, gifted with tongues and self-confident beyond belief.

He knew nothing of us at first, for we sat in our hut with a smudge going, nervous about flies, even Coutlass, reckless as a rule of anything he could not see and perfectly indifferent to death for others, now fidgety and afraid to swagger forth.

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One of our Nyamwezi porters suddenly made a great shout of "*Hodi!*" (May I come in?) and came stooping through the low door.

"Is it true, *Bwana*," he asked, "that the Germans will come soon and conquer this part of Africa?"

"Certainly not," said Fred.

"There is one out here, a Baganda, who says they will surely come. He says the religion of Islam will be preached from end to end of everywhere and that the Germans are the true priests of Islam. They will come, says he, when the time is ripe, and call on all the converts of Islam to rise and slay all other people, including all white folk, like the English, who do not accept that creed. If that is true, *Bwana*, whither shall we go, and whither shall you go, to escape such terrible things?"

"Does the Baganda know there are white men in this village?" Fred asked.

"Not yet, *Bwana*."

"Don't tell him, then, but bring him in here. Tell him there are colored folk in here who say he is a liar."

The Nyamwezi backed out, and we heard whispering outside. There is precious little performance in Africa without a deal of talk. At the end of about ten minutes the porter again shouted "*Hodi*," and this time he was followed in by the stranger, seven other of our own men uninvited bringing up the rear.

"Jambo!" (How do you do?) said the Baganda with a great effort at bravado when his eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom and the first severe surprize of seeing white men had worn off.

He was a very cool customer indeed.

"Whose pimp are you?" demanded Fred, without answering the salutation.

The man fell back on insolence at once.

"I am employed by a gentleman of superior position," he answered in perfectly good English.

"Is his name Schillingschen?"

The Baganda hesitated.

"All right," said Fred. "I know his name is Schillingschen. These men tell me you have said that the Germans are coming to conquer the country and destroy all people, including the English, who have not accepted Islam."

The man hesitated again, glancing over his shoulder to discover his retreat cut off by our porters and eyeing Fred with malignity that reminded one of a cornered beast of prey. He could control his face but not his eyes.

"Oh no, sir," he answered after swallowing a time or two. "How could they tell such lies against me? I am a person born in Uganda, now a British protectorate and enjoying all blessings of British rule. I am educated at the mission college at Entebbe. How should I tell such a tale against my benefactors?"

"That is what you are here to explain," Fred answered. "No! You can't escape, you hellion! Squat down and answer."

The Baganda made a sudden dive and a determined struggle to get through the door, but our porters were too quick and strong for him.

"Confession is your one chance," said Fred.

"Put hot irons to his feet!" advised Coutlass. The native beer had left him villainously evil-tempered. "Gassharramminy! Leave me alone with that fat Baganda for half an hour, and I will make him tell me what is on the far side of the moon, as well as what his mother said and did before she bore him!"

"Shall I hand you over to this Greek gentleman?" suggested Fred.

"Oh, my ——, no!" the Baganda answered trembling. "Hand me over to the Bwana Collector! He will put me in jail. I am not afraid of British jail. It will not be for long. The English do not punish as the Germans do. You dare not assault me. You dare not torture me! You must hand me over to the Bwana Collector to be tried in court of law!"

"Make him prisoner in the sleeping sickness village you told us about," advised Coutlass.

"Oh, no, no! Oh, gentlemen! That is not how white Englishmen behave. You must either let me go or ——"

He made another terrific dive for liberty, biting and kicking at his captors and finally lying on his back to scream as if the hot irons Coutlass had recommended were being applied in earnest.

"What shall we do with the beast?" asked Fred. The hut was so full of his infernal screaming that we could talk without his hearing us.

"Tie him up," I said. "If we let him go, he'll run straight to Schillingschen."

"Leave him in here with Coutlass and me," urged Brown.

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He and Coutlass had grown almost friendly since getting drunk together on the native beer.

"I recommend," said Will, "that we take the law in our own hands——"

THE Baganda ceased screaming and listened. For some reason he suspected Will of being the deciding factor in our counsels—perhaps because Will had said least.

"Take the law in our own hands and thrash him soundly. Later on we can report what we have done to the British Government and ask for condonation under the circumstances or pay whatever piffling fine they care to impose for the sake of appearances. The point is—there's no court of law in these parts to hand him over to, and he needs punishing."

"I agree," said Fred. "Let's thrash him to begin with."

"Let's thrash him," went on Will, "as thoroughly as we've seen his friends, the Germans, do the job."

"Both sides," agreed Brown.

"Oh, no, no, no! You can not do that, gentlemen!"

"Lay him out," ordered Fred. "Let's begin on him. Who shall beat him first?"

At a nod from Fred our porters stretched him face-downward on the dry dung floor and knelt on his arms and legs. One of them stuffed a good handful of the dry dung into his mouth to stop his yelling.

"Of course," added Will rather slowly and distinctly, "if he told us about Schillingschen, we'd have to let him off. Let's hope he holds his tongue, for I never wanted to flog a man so much in all my life."

The most palpable absurdity at the moment was that there was nothing in the hut to beat him with. There were dozens of strips of the recently shot hippo hide hanging in the sun outside to dry, with stones tied to the end of each to keep them taut and straight, but nobody made a move to bring one in.

"Take off his loin-cloth," ordered Fred. "It won't hurt him enough with that thing on!"

The Baganda spat the cow-dung from his mouth and struggled violently.

"Oh, no, no!" he shouted. "I will tell! I will tell everything!"

"Too late now!" said Will jubilantly.

"No, gentlemen, no! Not too late! I tell all—I tell quickly! Only listen! Bwana Schillingschen will shoot me if he knows! He is very bad man—very *kali*—very fierce—and oh, too clever! You must protect me!"

He could hardly get the words out, for the knees of our porters pinned him down, and his chin was pressed hard on the floor.

"I ordered that loin-cloth removed," was all Fred commented.

One of the porters attended to the task, and the Baganda hurried with his tale, drawing in breath in noisy gasps like a man with asthma, because of the weight of his captors on him and the strained position of his neck.

"Bwana Schillingschen is sending me and many other men—not all Baganda, but of many tribes—to go through all parts and say Islam is the only good religion—all Germans are high-priests of Islam—soon the Germans are coming with very great armies to destroy the British and all other foolish people who had not accepted Islam as their creed! All are to get ready to receive the Germans."

"Where is Schillingschen now?" demanded Fred.

"Beyond Mumias."

"How far beyond Mumias?"

"Who knows? He is marching."

"In which direction? What for?"

"To Mount Elgon. I do not know what for."

"How do you know he is going to Mount Elgon?"

"He told me to go there and find him after my work is done."

"How long were you to continue at what you call your work?"

"A month or five weeks."

"So he expects to stay a long time up there?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I do not know."

"Has he many loads with him?"

"Very many—provisions for a long time."

"Guns?"

"Several. I do not know how many. He gives guns to some of his men when he gets to where the Government will not know about it."

"How many men has he?"

"Not many. Ten, I think."

"How can they carry all those loads?"

"He brought a hundred porters from

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Kisumu to Mumias, and there he bought more than forty donkeys, sending the porters back again."

"Then, are the men he has with him his own?"

"Yes."

"From German East?"

"Yes."

"What orders did he give you besides to tell these lies about German conquest?"

"None."

"Pass me that whip," ordered Fred.

There was no whip, but the Baganda could not know that.

"He gave the same order to all of us," he yelled. "We are to stay out a month or five weeks unless we meet white men. If we meet white men, we are to discover the white men's plans by talking with their servants and then to hurry to him and report."

"Ah! How many other spies has he out in this direction?"

"None."

"Why don't you pass me that whip when I ask for it?" demanded Fred.

"None! None! None, *Bwana!* I am the only man in this direction! He has sent them north, south, east and west, but I am the only one down here."

"He has a lot more to tell yet," said Coutlass. "Let me put hot irons on his feet!"

Fred demurred.

"He couldn't march with us if we did that," he said with a wink.

"Who cares whether or not he marches!" answered Coutlass. "To tell all he knows is his business. Wait while I heat the iron."

The Baganda began to scream again, babbling that he knew no more. He assured us that Schillingschen had set the closest watch along the old caravan route and toward his own rear in the direction of Kisumu, whence officials might come on chance errands.

"All right," said Fred. "Truss him up tight and keep him prisoner among our men in their hut."

"Our men are likely to get drunk tonight," warned Will.

"Let me watch him," urged Coutlass. "Leave me with him alone."

TO THE Greek's disgust we decided to trust the prisoner with our own men and to keep very careful watch on them, threatening them with loss of all their pay if they dared get drunk and lose him—a threat they accepted at its full face value but resented owing to Brown's and the Greek's behavior the night before.

They begged leave to get a little drunk—to get half as drunk as Brown had been—half as drunk as Coutlass had been—not drunk at all, but just to drink a little. We were adamant, and Brown added to their resentment by preaching them a sermon in their own tongue on the importance of being respectful toward white folk.

Kazimoto came in toward dark, footweary but primed with news, and most of what he had to say confirmed the Baganda's story. Schillingschen, he said, was making for Mount Elgon in very leisurely stages, letting his loaded donkeys graze their way along and spending hours of his time in questioning natives along the way on every subject under the sun.

Besides the fact of his leisurely progress, which was sufficiently important in itself, we learned from Kazimoto that Schillingschen's own ten boys were unable to speak the language of the country beyond a few of the commonest words—that they all slept in a tent together at night, usually quite a little distance apart from Schillingschen's—and that the donkeys were usually picketed between the two tents in a long line. He also told us the ten men had five Mauser rifles between them, in addition to the German's own battery of three guns, one of which he carried all day and kept beside his bed at night; the other two were carried behind him in the daytime by a gun-bearer.

That was good news on the whole. Coutlass went out on the strength of it and began to drink beer from the big earthenware crock in which the women had just brewed a fresh supply. Brown joined him within five minutes, and at the end of an hour they were swearing everlasting friendship, Coutlass promising Brown his cattle back, and Brown assuring him that Greece and the Greeks had always held his warmest possible regard.

"Thermopylæ, y'know, old boy, an' Marathon an' all that kind o' thing! How many miles in a day could a Greek run in them days? Gosh!"

They two drank themselves to sleep among the gentle cattle in the circular enclosure in the midst of the village, and we—going out in turns at intervals to make sure our own boys were not drinking—matured our plans in peace.

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We were too few to dare undertake the task in front of us without the aid of Brown and the Greek. It was a case of who was not against us must be for us, and the end must justify both men and means. We tried to work out ways of managing without them, but, when we thought of our Baganda prisoner and the almost certainty that both he and Coutlass would race to give our game away to Schillingschen if let out of sight for a minute, the necessity of making the best, not the worst, of the Greek seemed overwhelming.

Early next morning, before the village had awakened from its glut of beer and hippo meat, we shook Coutlass and Brown to their feet none too gently and, with the Baganda firmly secured by the wrists between two of our men, started off, Fred leading.

The village awoke as if by magic before we had dragged away the thorns from the gate, and the chief leaped to the realization that the beads he had promised his women were about as concrete as his drunken dreams. He and a swarm of his younger men followed us, begging and arguing—mile after mile—growing angrier and more importunate. It was by my advice that we crossed the stream into the sleeping sickness zone and left them shuddering on their own side.

Our own men did not know so much about the ravages of that plague and in any case were willing to run whatever risks we despised. But we took a long bend back and crossed the stream again higher up as soon as the chief and his beggars were out of sight. It was a pity not to keep exact faith and give them the promised beads, if only for the sake of other white men who might camp there in future; but more than four tons of hippo meat was not bad pay for their hospitality.

We wished we had as good price to offer at the villages on our way, for sleep under cover we must if we hoped to escape the ravages of fever; and the primitive savage, at least in those parts, had the principle down fine of nothing whatever for nothing. Yet, as it turned out, the very man whose company we looked on as a nuisance proved to be a key to all gates.

We marched along the track the Baganda had taken. The chiefs of all villages knew him again, and the men who dared take such a prophet of evil prisoner were looked on as high Government officials at least.

We accepted that description of ourselves, letting it go by silent assent and explaining our lack of tents and almost every other thing the white man generally travels with as due to haste. Heaven only knew what lies Kazimoto told those credulous folk, to the perfectly worthy end of making our lot bearable, but we were fed after a fashion and lodged after a worse one all along our road.

And who should send in reports about us—and to whom? Obviously white men with a prisoner, marching in such a hurry toward the north, were Government officials. As for the tale about our having left our loads behind—are not all white people crazy? Who shall explain their craziness?

TO BE CONCLUDED

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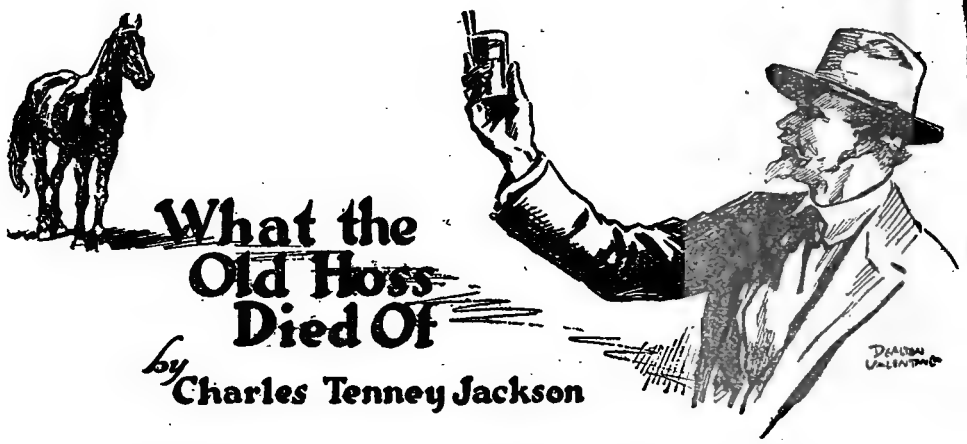

What the Old Hoss Died Of

by Charles Tenney Jackson

Author of "A Little Jigger This Mornin'," and "High Trail and Home Trail."

IN A pleasing little round of African golf played across the upturned bottom of a stable bucket, "Doc" Fortune had led the field until Hogjaw rolled his point five times and then shook 'leven twice handrunning. Then Mr. Fortune squatted back on his heels and dismally remembered the errand which had brought him to Judge Melder's plantation.

"Man, Miss Mattie done give me dat five dollehs to come ove' heah and bury dat Ahasuerus hoss. Now, whut-all I goin' to do?"

"Man, yo' cleaned out." Hogjaw rattled the bones in his victim's face. "Man, yo' faded." The conqueror's glance fell upon the resplendent ankles of Doc Fortune craftily. "But I give yo' one more chance —I shoot you a dolleh agin dem socks."

Doc caressed one blue silk sock—there was a handy little hole in the heel where he could rub his stone-bruise. Then he looked off to the exercise lot, where a trainer was putting one of Judge Melder's thoroughbreds through a pace for the edification of Col. T. Sambola Tunk. The sight of Col. Tunk, hands behind his back, coat-tails parted, benignly at peace with the world, seemed to give Doc reassurance—the colonel was a gallant and constant caller at the home of his mistress and certainly would plead his cause if fate proved again unkind.

"Dem socks," he ruminated. "Reverend Mr. Tuttle, whut calls on Miss Mattie, done give me dem socks. If he see me around de yahd Sunday mornin' and no socks, Mr. Tuttle know I been crap-shootin' agin."

"A dolleh agin' dem socks," enticed Hogjaw, rattling the dice.

"Dolleh agin one sock."

"Whut-all I want wif one sock? I shoot a dolleh to two socks!"

Again Doc looked uncertainly off to Colonel Tunk, the redoubtable admirer of his young mistress.

"Well, den—two socks—and I t'row in dat Ahasuerus hoss!"

"Whut-all I want wif a daid race-hoss?"

"I shoot mah socks and dat 'Hash hoss agin yo' dolleh!" Doc grabbed the little cubes of destiny. "Let 'er go, boy! Eight's mah point! Oh, Little Joe! Eight's mah point! Oh, come—baby! Eight——"

Mr. Fortune stopped abruptly. Hogjaw gave an exultant yell. On the field of honor lay a fatal seven. Hogjaw gave another whoop that caused Col. T. Sambola Tunk to turn inquiringly. The victor was pointing a long yellow finger at Doc Fortune's ankles.

"Oh, dem beautiful blue silk babies! Oh, boy—gimme mah socks!"

Doc arose and sighed. The colonel was approaching.

"You got mah five dollehs," ruminated Doc, "and yo' won mah socks—and you won ole 'Hash hoss, too, man!"

"Whut-all I want wif a daid race-hoss?"

"I don't keer. It'll cost yo' dat five dollehs to haul dat hoss off Judge Melder's place and pay de veterinary!"

"Huc-come?" Hogjaw paused. "A daid hoss doan' need no hoss-docto', do he?"

"De State veterinary he done been

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speculatin' round in dat hoss' insides to see what he done died of. It'll cost you dat five dollehs, man!"

And Doc suddenly went into guffaws of laughter. Even the loss of his silk socks was avenged by the dilemma that suddenly dawned on the victor's triumph. Doc was cleaned out financially, but he was rid of responsibility for the funeral arrangements of Ahasuerus, decrepit relic of the late Maj. Millard's racing string.

Comes then Col. T. Sambola Tunk, of Mississippi City, Mississippi, with an air of assured authority.

"Boy," he said to the grimacing Hogjaw, "we shall not start for home until after dark. A little matter of business has come up between Judge Melder and myself." The colonel's voice grew mysterious. "Do you know, seh, if—at the State line—they still keep up this outrageous spying upon gentlemen who enter Mississippi from N'Awlyins?"

Hogjaw at once became equally mysterious and discerning.

"Reckon dey do, Kunnel. Dey stopped Mr. Crowninfield's ottermobile yistiddy and tuk off two suitcases of bottled goods. And de niggeh drivin' dar cyar he ain't out of jail yit!"

Colonel Tunk considered gravely.

"Well, we shall see. A start, Hogjaw, not earlier than eight o'clock, mind."

"Yas, seh! But, Kunnel—whut we goin' to do wif our race-hoss?"

"Race-hoss? Our race-hoss?"

"We done won a race-hoss. Dis yere Doc Fawtchune he jes' shook me his socks and dat ole Ahasuerus hoss of Majeh Millard's, and I done got him!"

The colonel gasped:

"Ahasuerus? That scoundrelly hoss that mighty near ruined my respected friend, Major Millard, and which Miss Mattie just couldn't abide on her plantation? What's the matter with Ahasuerus now?"

"Nuffin. 'Cept he's daid. An' it'll take all de five dollehs whut I won off Doc to pay de veterinary and bury dat 'Hash hoss."

"Ahasuerus gone," mused the colonel. "Of all the classic thoroughbreds which my late friend, Major Millard, developed and raced to fame, Ahasuerus was the one utterly worthless reprobate, without conscience, ambition or honor. He never won a race, seh, from Pimlico to Oakland track, and yet such was the childlike faith and loving care which Major Millard bestowed on him that he left special instructions to me as executor of his estate to see that Ahasuerus never lacked anything as long as he lived."

"Yas seh!" put in Doc eagerly. "But Miss Mattie couldn't abide him; so she boa'ded him out at Judge Melder's yere fo' five years. Sho, I know dat hoss! De champeen feed-bag cleaner of de circuit, seh, but, if Majeh Millard eve' entered him in a first race, 'Hash'd neve' git home until de bookies was payin' off fo' de seventh."

Col. Tunk shook his head. He knew. Trainers, rubber boys, jockies, exercise men—all for nine years had poured their hate and execration on the luckless Ahasuerus, but nothing had ever broken Maj. Millard's love for the skate. Prone on the turf out in the exercise lot they could see the defunct evil celebrity of the Millard stables, his ewe-neck thrust out, his yellow teeth stretched as if, even in death, he was eager to grab one more mouthful of the good green earth—Ahasuerus, king of the tail-enders, the perennial long shot of the American tracks, for the most cautious bookmaker would lay sixty to one against him in any going any time; and 'Hash generously reciprocated by never taking a dollar of their money in all his venerable career. When, upon his master's death, he was turned to the pasture on Judge Melder's place to keep him out of Miss Mattie's sight, he again attained an evil renown by eating more than any six horses put together. A rat-tailed, long-faced wreck with an appetite was Ahasuerus, and even in death he presented a melancholy problem.

"Well, well," sighed Col. Tunk, "I am glad I happened in on Judge Melder befo' the last sad rites. Sentiment, seh—sentiment. If Major Millard were alive, such being his feelings for Ahasuerus, I know he would want this hoss brought back to Mississippi City and interred in the lot with his famous racers—Imperator and Lady Arabelle, who could each do their six furlongs in better than twelve."

But even the two menials looked aghast at this sacrilege.

"Kunnel," protested Doc Fortune, "Miss Mattie'd raise conniption fits if dat 'Hash done been buried with Imperator! She give me five dollehs to git rid o' him."

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"An' now a little crap game wish't him on me," added Hogjaw dismally. "I doan git nuffin outen dat five-spot dat I won, Kunnel, time I pay dat hoss-doctor and haulin' 'Hash off Judge Melder's lot."

"What," queried Col. Tunk, gazing down on the fallen feed-bag champion, "did the old hoss die of?"

"I dunno. Dey thought he acted s'picious. Dey pursue round in his insides and took out all his izzards and gizzards; so old 'Hash he holler lak a drum. Dat State doctor say mebbe old 'Hash had glanders, fo' he stand round all day runnin' at his eyes lak he was weepin' ove' a misspent life. Yas, seh!"

"That," returned the colonel tranquilly, "is the only runnin' that Ahasuerus ever did in his worthless career, Hogjaw!"

"Yas seh!"

"Remember — eight o'clock. As for 'Hash——"

Col. Tunk sighed and went to the big house. In the dining-room he and Judge Melder mixed a little toddy and discussed—well, the usual affair of state which engages gentlemen living on either side of the line which divides the arid pine and sand lands of Mississippi from the tropical fullness of the damp parishes of Louisiana.

"You better draw it off in bottles," mused the judge, "and your boy can come over and visit my quarter hands now and then—you said he was an entirely trustworthy boy, seh."

"Entirely, seh. The best workin'est nigger, seh, in Callaway County, Mississippi—but under continual suspicion of the Philistines. As fo' the whisky, Judge, I dislike to remove it from the wood. Eight gallons of Bourbon—in wood, seh—merely a harmless, necessary little keg." The colonel stirred his toddy and looked out to the October twilight. "And now I have this hoss—a miserable broken-down racin'-hoss——"

"Of the dead speak nothing but good," put in the judge, "as our lamented friend, Major Millard, would have said. But—between gentlemen—a contemptible, knock-kneed, ill-natured failure that brought eternal ridicule on the otherwise honored racing colors of the Millard house."

"I come," said Col. Tunk with equal solemnity, "to bury Ahasuerus, not to praise him. He will, however, furnish a pretext, seh, for another toddy. We drink, Judge, to—to——"

Col. Tunk elevated his, looked out the window and then suddenly started. He gasped silently, set down the toddy, twisted his imperial, closed one eye, opened it, gasped again and stared out the window as one to whom had come a miracle-working vision. He lifted his toddy, bowed low—then the glass to his lips.

"To—Ahasuerus! Like unto the hoss which the gift-bearing Greeks sent within the walls of Troy—so comes Ahasuerus to the county even of the Philistines!"

And then, drinking, the colonel drew the judge to the window and whispered long, eloquently.

"Impossible!" gasped Judge Melder. "Ahasuerus — the keg — eh? Well, call in that rascally servant of yours, seh! It may be—genius, seh!"

"The glory that was 'skies—the grandeur that was rum—to complete the classical allusions, seh," winked Col. Tunk. "My boy will see to the details—but to us, seh, the creative vision, the—the——"

But Col. T. Sambola Tunk seemed overcome with emotion. He winked again at the judge, bowed, went his way to find his black shadow.

THAT night there might have been seen Col. Tunk, of Mississippi City, Mississippi, upright, imperially serene beside the driver of a farm truck which contained the mortal remains of Ahasuerus, king of the skates. On either side of the truck-box rode Hogjaw and Doc Fortune. The latter gazed down, mystified, on the ungainly form of his master's last race-hoss.

"Say, boy—dis hoss! All swole up lak a poisoned pup! And a daid race-hoss doan need no hoss-blanket, do he?"

"Dis funeral," rejoined Col. Tunk's henchman, "is passed outen yo' hands. Yo' lost yo' rights in dis hoss on a crap game—and when yo' goin' gimme mah socks, man?"

"But—huccome?" and Mr. Fortune gaping and, mystified again, pointed at the defunct Ahasuerus.

It was so. The chicken-fence-slat effect of the feed-bag champion was lost in an aldermanic girth. Never a Christmas turkey so roundly stuffed, nor a duck so neatly trussed and sewn down the front, as was

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Ahasuerus, late relic and wrecker of the Maj. Millard racing fortunes. If 'Hash ever boasted a perfect thirty-six, he had sidestepped it now, and whatever nature and the State veterinary had taken away, art and darkness and Col. T. Sambola Tunk had added to him.

Doc Fortune gazed; he licked his lips and sniffed.

"I smell whisky," he muttered. "Whut-all dat ole hoss die of?"

"Boy," returned the chief mourner, "you doan smell nuthin'. Dat hoss had enough alcohol rubbed on his laigs by dem hoss-trainers tryin' to git him in show money in ole racin'-days to corrup' Mississippi. Yas, seh! An' all de dope dey doped him an' de likker dey rubbed him only give him er appetite. Ain't so, Kunnel?"

But Col. Tunk merely looked imperially ahead from the driver's seat. When the main pike approached the State line crossing, two men approached from the store gallery and waved a lantern.

"Evenin', gentlemen!"

"Evenin', seh! Why—it's Colonel Tunk!"

The dry-State constable winked at his deputy. He climbed upon the truck wheel and lifted his light to illumine the dark places. There was Ahasuerus, the fallen, but ten thousand candle-power would not have searched out the subtle soul of Col. T. Sambola Tunk. Just Col. Tunk, a dead race-hoss and two colored men on a two-ton farm truck, Mississippi-bound.

"Hate to disturb you, seh," murmured the constable, "but they'se been a power of liquor run over the line from N'Awlyins lately. Just got to look around, Colonel."

"At your pleasure, seh," returned Col. Tunk tranquilly proud. "The last race-hoss of Major Millard's stables, seh, goin' back to lie with Imperator and Lady Arabelle in the pecan lot, according to the late major's last will and testament, seh. I as executor, seh——"

"Certainly, seh. We all knew the major's peculiarities, seh!"

He flashed the lantern once, twice, over the blanketed remains, even lifted a corner, climbed off the wheel and grinned. No illicit demijohn, no case of bottled goods. True, Col. Tunk might have a fair pint in his pants' pocket, but what was a pint between friends?

The emissaries of the law looked at each other knowingly but satisfied.

"It's the automobile runners that make the trouble," commented one. "And so the old 'Hash hoss is dead? Bet Miss Mattie Millard'll breathe a sigh of relief—ownin' a race-hoss kind o' hurt her in the church, I reckon."

"This hoss, seh, neve' won a bet for a livin' bein'—he was a chronic discourager of gamin' and a drawback to sport. Ahasuerus, seh—did more in his life to blight racin' than all the laws of the States, seh. But a bit of sentiment in my old and respected friend, the major, led me to take charge of his obsequies—I came to bury Ahasuerus, not to praise him, as I remarked to Judge Melder this evenin'."

"You're right, seh. Evenin', Colonel."

"Evenin', evenin'—seh!"

Two miles down the pike Col. Tunk lifted his hat with the homage due the bright home glow in the window of Miss Mattie Millard's sitting-room as they passed the big house. Just outside the pecan lot the truck stopped; over the fence the stone shaft erected to the Millard thoroughbreds of a decade agone seemed an accusing specter in the moonlight. Even Doc Fortune felt the sacrilege as he and Hogjaw dumped Ahasuerus out on a pile of straw. The colonel went to the front gallery of the *ante bellum* mansion. Miss Mattie herself opened the door, and she appeared surprized. So was Col. Tunk. So was the tall, athletic young preacher of the First Baptist Church who arose from the divan hastily.

"Evenin', Colonel!"

"Evenin', seh!"

"Why, Colonel," chirruped Miss Mattie, "you're just in time. Mr. Tuttle will take us down to the church for the Hallowe'en celebration. The young folks'll have an apple-bobbin'."

"Thanks, Miss Mattie. But I've come on mo' weighty matters. I come on a sad duty, I regret to say. A prodigal has returned——"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Ahasuerus, Miss Mattie—the last of your respected father's race-hosses—" the colonel lifted a hand solemnly—"has passed."

"Oh, I knew that! I sent one of our hands over there to get him off Judge Melder's place. Dead—that awful beast! Cheers! Goody, goody!"

"Miss Mattie," protested the colonel, "your lamented father——"

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"But, as president of the county Anti-Liquor League and member of the Ladies' Aid of the church, Colonel, I just couldn't own a race-horse! And Ahasuerus—oh, you don't know how relieved I am!"

"But, Miss Mattie—the major's last wishes about his hosses——"

"Oh, Colonel! You didn't bring him home? Not to rest in the same lot with Lady Arabelle?"

"Oh, Mattie, Mattie!" sighed the preacher. "I thought you were against all race-horses! But blood will tell!"

"But Ahasuerus—who almost ruined the family! There never was anything good in his carcass—not a thing!"

"A matter of sentiment, Miss Mattie, due to your father. And from Ahasuerus' dust might spring—as the Scriptures would put it—frankincense and myrrh—am I not correct, seh?"

"Perfectly," retorted the young Rev. Mr. Tuttle, "although, recalling what I do of our first families in the days when Ahasuerus was racing—I should say it might be Bourbon."

Col. Tunk started slightly. Biblical and classical allusions were food and—almost drink—to Col. T. Sambola Tunk, but he wished this clerical wit were less modern. Gazing out of the window, he saw a lantern moving off to the field hands' quarters and a dark heap on a pile of straw in the moonlight.

"Sentiment," murmured Miss Mattie, "but I'm sure father never intended to bury Ahasuerus alongside Lady Arabelle."

"Ashes to ashes," quoted Col. Tunk. "And I—Miss Mattie—as executor, must take the responsibility. Evenin', seh!"

"Evenin'," responded the Rev. Mr. Tuttle, and they watched Col. Tunk depart with dignity and firm virtue.

"The dear old colonel!" sighed Miss Mattie. "Think of that for devotion to our family. It almost makes me cry, Dick!"

"Touching," soothed Mr. Tuttle, "but he turned down our Hallowe'en party—nothing but cider there, of course, and Colonel Tunk——"

COL. TUNK'S cigar glowed by the side of Ahasuerus' funeral pyre. Then he strode on, paused, looked back uncertainly and went his way homeward. Hogjaw had already gone. The field hands' quarters were in darkness. Nowhere a light save at the big house and down the pike at the First Baptist parsonage, where madcap revels held sway about a bonfire.

"We shall wait," Col. Tunk murmured. "Baptists do not revel after midnight. Then Hogjaw and I shall investigate. This is the first time in his career Ahasuerus was ever worth even a drink of moonshine—and the gift of Ahasuerus now is twelve-year-old if it's a month. Good old hoss! If the major could only see him now!"

And in a sentimental virtue of introspection as to what Maj. Millard would have approved, the colonel dozed by his fire over a toddy. In the kitchen Hogjaw devoured a po'hk chop—cold. And they waited—listened, yearned, while the colonel's old clock went *tick-tock*.

IT WAS half an hour later that Miss Mattie—having powdered her nose again—left the house with Mr. Tuttle, who thoughtfully unpowdered his sleeve. Nose—sleeve; sleeve—nose. Mr. Tuttle was taller by far. They strolled slowly, by romantic moonlight, down the lane. Hard by arose the tombstone of Imperator under the pecan trees. And by the fence Ahasuerus, the fallen, on his bed of hay.

"Ugh," said Miss Mattie, "that awful brute! Whatever do you suppose he died of?"

"If," responded the Rev. Mr. Tuttle thoughtfully, "he ran along with Col. T. Sambola Tunk, he died of delirium tremens."

"Oh, Dick!" she gurgled. "I don't want him in the horse lot! It's—desecration! If we could only burn him before the colonel gets more sentimental over dad and old days!"

"Say not so," murmured Dick. "It's Hallowe'en, and with a can of oil and all that straw Ahasuerus would make an elegant funeral pyre."

COL. TUNK, his dressing-gown carelessly over his frock coat, was nodding before his fire, awaiting the midnight hour of Hallowe'en when ghosts do walk, when he was aroused by a startled exclamation. Hogjaw, his faithful majordomo, was by the sitting-room window staring out pop-eyed.

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"Kunnel!"

"Seh?"

"Ahasuerus done been all lit up!"

"What? Lit up—well, eight gallons of Bourbon, boy——"

"Done gone up de flue! O-oh—Kunnel!"

"What's the matter, boy?"

"Looky!" gasped Hogjaw. "Oh, Lawd!"

The colonel gazed. There was a red glare down the Millard lane. Young Baptist barbarians, all at play, were dancing around. Col. Tunk murmured; he seized his hat. Down the main pike Hogjaw, in the rear, saw once the colonel stumble. But they drew near, reached the fence where Imperator and Lady Arabelle lay, their tombs lit by the unholy red glare of Ahasuerus, king of the tail-enders.

The colonel gazed over an array of lads and lasses about the column of smoke and lurid ash. He heard a comment from an elder.

"This dawg-gone bonfire smells like a—a—rum omelet."

And another good brother started suspiciously.

"Rum omelet, hey?"

"Well, I've heard tell of 'em!"

And, staring over that picket fence, Col. Tunk and his man Friday hung and gazed and gazed. The colonel's lips moved now and then. But Hogjaw could not get him away. They stayed there until the young folks began to wander off by couples and twos and threes down the road to their own celebration.

"Rum omelet," whispered Col. Tunk in the shadows. "Rum—the last infamy, seh—fate might have spared me this!"

"Lookee, Kunnel," mumbled his faithful henchman, "ole 'Hash hoss burnin' blue as sulfur—blue flame lak graveyahd hants!"

The last of the staring urchins had departed for the apple-bobbin' down the road to the parsonage, and still Col. Tunk hung apathetically over the fence. But a single couple remained about the impromptu Hallowe'en celebration which Ahasuerus had furnished in his homecoming. Col. Tunk recognized them dismally. One was the Rev. Mr. Tuttle, and he took a long pole and stirred the glowing ashes where pecan limbs, straw and coal-oil had wreaked their will upon the last of Major Millard's racing string.

"Thank goodness!" cried Miss Mattie. "In spite of Col. Tunk, Ahasuerus will never be buried with dad's wonderful horses, will he?"

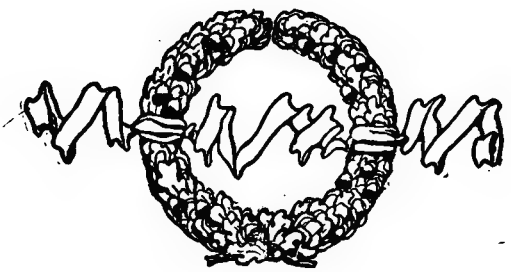
"The colonel can reverently gather the bones—if he feels that way. Now, isn't that strange, Mattie—look at that unearthly blue fire? Strange—strange! Whatever do you suppose the old horse died of?"

"And look, Dick! What are those funny red-hot objects in the ashes? What in the world?"

From the outer darkness Col. Tunk was listening, watching, and now and then he licked a dry lip as the ashes fell lower and the blue flame twisted higher like a brandy sauce on the burned offering of his hopes. Then he heard a wondering little cry from Miss Mattie.

"Dick! Just look at that fire? What was the matter with Ahasuerus?"

"Plain as could be," chuckled Mr. Tuttle, "what the old hoss died of. Whooping cough—plain as could be. Just look at the hoops."



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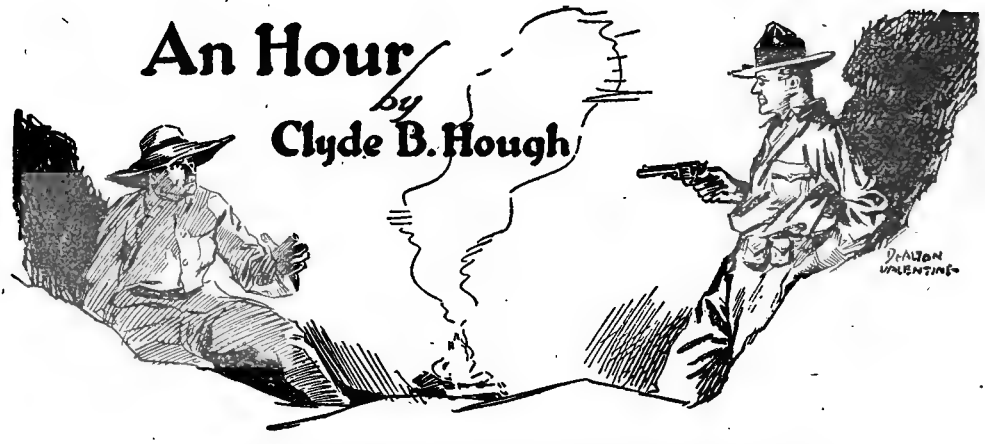
An Hour

by

Clyde B. Hough



Author of "The Fingers of Home," "The Vengeance of Rooney," etc.

HIGH up in the Banguet Range, Nolte stood guard on a small, shaky, bamboo bridge. Some twenty feet beneath the bridge a deep, narrow stream, tumbling down from its source, swirled and gurgled, a pale, billowing ribbon under the full moon. The pale ribbon was visible for perhaps forty yards down the mountainside, and then it disappeared under a black arch of overlapping palm and plantain leaves.

The hour had just been repeated by the round of sentinels, each in turn. The last long-drawn call—"Post number fourteen, one o'clock and all's well"—had barely ceased reverberating down a near-by ravine when Nolte heard an unmistakable whir in the air immediately behind him. Instinctively, instantly, he threw himself flat on the little bridge. The long, wooden spear, iron-tipped, passed over, completed its arc and struck the water a dozen feet down-stream. Nolte shuddered. Had the spear found its aim, it would have gone through, shank and shaft.

In his haste Nolte had not been careful, and a greater part of his body-weight was flung over the edge of the narrow span. It was impossible to recover. He heaved his carbine clear of the stream and heard it thud on the bank. The shock of his fall into the water was so great that for a brief space he heard music and far-off, tinkly bells. But this could not have been for long, because he came back and forced his head above water in time to glimpse stars and clear sky just before the surging current rushed him through the black arch.

Beyond the arch all was dark save where moon-pierced leafage dappled the speeding water. At first Nolte tried to fight his way to the banks, first one and then the other, but the stream was too swift, the current too powerful. It was an utter waste of strength, strength that was likely to be needed later on. And time after time, when he won near to land, he was dashed with numbing force against some outjutting rock. So he gave over all effort to reach either bank and devoted his energy to keeping midstream and above surface. And this was not an easy task, for his khaki clothes, his leggings and stout Army shoes were heavy with water. And the web belt and revolver at his waist seemed to weigh a ton.

Several times as he was swept along Nolte's hands came in contact with low-hanging fronds and slender boughs. Each time he would grasp these, and each time they broke, and he was hurried on, the water roaring in his ears, his perilous career unchecked. He had been carried down-stream approximately five hundred yards when the narrow river made an abrupt turn, broadened and formed a sort of elbow. The current flung Nolte into this elbow, and his hands and feet felt soft earth. He clawed his way shoreward frantically, desperately, on all fours like some terror-stricken animal. And at every move he dug his fingers and toes deep in the soft mud, lest the current drag him back.

After several minutes of struggle Nolte stood up on dry soil. It was dark—so dark that he could not see his own hand.

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Somehow the place conveyed to his mind the impression of a dungeon, and yet there was the steady draft of a strong air current. He started to walk and found his feet again in water. In the darkness he had lost his sense of direction and walked back into the stream. He drew out quickly, turned and went in the opposite direction, groping, his hands outstretched.

A few steps and his right hand came in contact with a solid wall. It was rock; he knew by the feel of it. He put out his left hand and touched another rock wall. He had entered a narrow tunnel which terminated at the bank of the river. Nolte groped his way along, guided by touch. He was very careful not to make the slightest noise. The tunnel twisted and turned, sometimes almost doubled on itself. And sometimes Nolte bumped his face or head against an unexpected outjut of the solid walls.

Then suddenly he found himself in a circle of pale light in what seemed an inverted bowl with the bottom smashed out. He was standing on the floor of an extinct crater. Quickly he drew back into the dark tunnel mouth and from there examined the place without risk of being seen. The *ladrone* has a preference for caves. At its base the crater was perhaps fifty yards in circumference. The walls gradually converged upward, funnel-like, until they ended in an aperture of about twenty feet in diameter. It was this top opening which let in the pale circle of moonlight, and it also accounted for the draft Nolte had felt when he first entered the tunnel.

After the soldier had noted the main details of the cavern, he began to look more closely for possible occupants. His eyes had traveled about half-way around the irregular walls when they fixed on the figure of a man. The man wore a large palmetto hat and a suit of dingy native whites with an attempted military cut. Around his waist, outside of the blouse, was a belt of black leather with a short sword attached. His shoulders bespoke a big man. He was sitting on the ground, hunched over his knees. Nolte could see only his back and a part of the profile, but it was enough to show that he was white. Nolte knew of but one white man in the Philippines who would be skulking in a cave, free and unfettered. He felt sure that this was the one: "The Big White Devil"—*El Diablo Blanco Grande*, the ntiaves called him.

Nolte searched the cavern once more with his eyes and made sure that the man was alone. Then he drew his revolver stealthily, leveled it at the sitting figure, stepped out into the circle of moonlight and commanded—

"Hands up."

The man rose, stood limp and dejectedly raised his hands.

"Your pop-gun won't be needed," he said. "I haven't got a bullet left. My six-shooter's lying on the blanket over there by the wall."

The man's face was twisted in a forced sneer which was intended to screen his quaking soul. The voice was familiar. Nolte came close and scrutinized the features.

"It's Billy," he said at last.

The statement was not an exclamation. It was an admission, spoken slowly, regretfully, as one admits a fact which means calamity. For even then Nolte knew the truth.

"Yes, your brother, William Nolte, *El Diablo Blanco Grande*." Billy tried to say it boastfully, but his voice betrayed him.

Nolte did not answer his brother. He had a decision to make. He had suddenly brought up against a problem so big that it dazed.

EIGHTEEN months before, Nolte's brother, Billy, who was two years younger than Nolte, had been reported killed at the Battle of Calibra. This battle, one of the most sanguinary ever fought between Americans and Filipinos, was waged back and forth across a broad, swift river, with Americans intrenched on one bank and natives on the other. The natives attempted to cross the stream in small boats and were riddled, utterly routed. Then they started what seemed a stampede for the hills several miles away.

The American cavalry immediately began to swim the stream with their horses. When a large number of them were halfway across, the natives halted and opened fire. In the mêlée that followed, the plunging and splashing of horses, the tangle of equipments and hail of bullets, many men went down. After the battle Billy

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Nolte was not seen. Many of the men's bodies were never found; so it was naturally supposed that Billy was one of those. The official report was: "Killed in action."

Six or seven months after the Battle of Calibra, and after the insurreetion was practically quelled, northern Luzon became infested with a large and vicious band of *ladrones*. These repeatedly ambushed small detachments of American soldiers, captured several sentinels and robbed and murdered numerous natives. The natives claimed that the raids were led by a white man. They said that he was a big man, a perfect devil for cruelty. Hence the name, *El Diablo Blanco Grande*.

Whole companies had been detailed at various times to capture this band of *ladrones*. And always the *ladrones* disappeared somewhere in this very region where Nolte now found his brother.

On this latest expedition against the *ladrones*, in which two companies were taking part, there had been a short, sharp conflict further down in the hills a few days before. A great many of the *ladrones* were slain. They had been pretty generally scattered and a number of them captured. Yet it was known that a few of them were still at large, and evidently the leader was among those, for no leader had been captured. So the commander of the expedition decided to continue the pursuit until the remaining fugitives were taken. To this end he threw a circle of skirmishers completely around a large area wherein it was known that the remaining *ladrones* were hiding.

After the disastrous fight in the foothills, Billy, with a few of his followers, escaped and reached the usual refuge—the crater. They then learned that they were completely surrounded. The natives split up and tried to get through the encircling cordon of soldiers. It was one of those who flung the spear at Nolte which caused him to fall from the bridge. On the other hand, Billy had given up, beaten. And now he sat like a rat in a hole.

Mrs. Nolte, mother of the two boys, was a frail, gray little lady in extremely bad health. Her one consolation in her grief at Billy's supposed death had been that he had gone out fighting for his country. She was a great little patriot, was Mrs. Nolte. And to bring Billy back from the grave, disgraced, a traitor to be tried and hung, would be more than her frail body could stand. No one knew this so well as did Nolte.

Nolte leveled his revolver quickly, lest something should swerve him from his purpose. His knuckle-joint whitened around the trigger. There was a deep boom in the hollow cavern.

Billy Nolte, pale of face, his eyes wide and staring, sagged at the knees, slumped down and lay quiet.

Nolte was not surprized at the thing he had done. He had passed that state. He went calmly about the completion of his work. He possessed a water-proof matchbox that was a credit to its maker. With twigs and leaves he built several fires in the tunnel at some distance apart until it was lighted all the way between crater and stream. Next he spread his brother's blanket beside the stream and placed on it a number of small rocks. Then he bound the blanket around Billy.

This done, Nolte gently towed his brother out on his greatest adventure. The current caught the body, swept it a little way out, and then the rocks slowly carried it down.

The moonlight drifted through the leafage and dappled the speeding water. Nolte bundled some twigs and grass and lit them as a torch so that he could find his way past the tunnel and up the steep bank. He reached the top and groped along upstream, falling and scrambling and feeling his way through the dense jungle. He was in a hurry. It would soon be time for the round of sentinels to call the hour. He must be there. At last he came out into the little clearing at the bridge and hurried down the bank to look for his carbine.

Number one called two o'clock. Nolte fumbled in the bushes and grass.

Number two repeated the call. Nolte groped for his carbine frantically. Ah—at last he had found it. He grasped it and started up the bank. Number three repeated the call, two o'clock. Nolte was number five. He hurried, breathing fast and reached the little bridge. Number four was repeating the call.

Number four's voice died away, trailed off down the mountainside. Nolte controlled his breathing, drew in a deep breath and called in a strong, steady voice—

"Post number five, two o'clock and all's well."

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The Hunting-Party

by W. P. Lawson

"TWENTY-TWO—twenty-three—twenty-four——"

The spoken numbers smote on Dunning's ears suddenly, arrestingly. They came in a slow monotone whose source seemed behind the screen of brush which edged the mountain trail. That they should sound at all in a spot so remote and hitherto so silent was what startled the ranger into a quick jerk on his sorrel's reins, a hand lifted to part the bushes at his right.

Dismounting, he peered through the opening thus made, his nerves a sounding-board on which the inexplicable voice played an unpleasant tune.

"Twenty-five—twenty-six——"

There on a ledge of rim-rock overhanging the steep-sided cañon of the Animas lay the prone figure of a boy, not more than twelve or fourteen at most. A rifle rested on his extended left hand, its butt set against his shoulder. He was sighting along the barrel and counting aloud, in an absorbtion so complete that he was as yet unaware of the ranger's proximity.

"Twenty-seven—twenty-eight——"

Dunning followed the line of the gun-barrel to the cañon bed. In the waning light of late afternoon he saw a line of horsemen, riding single file. On these figures the gun was trained. The boy was calling the roll of their number as he drew a bead on each in turn.

For a moment Dunning doubted his eyes. It was a band of half-naked, painted warriors he saw, winding by below like weirdly panoplied ghosts.

"Indians!" came his involuntary exclamation, though even yet he did not understand.

It was so improbable, their presence here in the Black Range, in his district.

As his voice sounded, the boy on the edge rose with a lithe movement of surpassing swiftness and stood motionless, facing the intruder. The absurdly long, heavy gun, which seemed of another era, was held at the ready. The boy's eyes, narrowed to a hard gleam, were fixed on Dunning's face.

The ranger felt a slight prickling sensation at his hair's roots.

"I'm the forest-ranger from Mogollon," he hastened to announce, "I heard you counting——"

The boy relaxed. His eyes opened to a wide, gray opaqueness. They were calm, impersonal. They held a far-away look like that of a seer of visions—true mountain eyes.

Through the deep brown of his features a flush showed.

"I was jest—playin'!" he explained.

"Playing?"

The wildness of the environment, that uncanny voice droning through the silence, the red men in the cañon—it seemed just then to Dunning that "play" as a descriptive word lacked something of adequacy.

The boy nodded sober assurance.

"Playin' Indians," he explained; "playin' like I was fightin' them, the way it was in the old days. Paw's told me about them days. He was here then—he's a plumb old-timer!"

The boy's tone as he pronounced this title was a decoration.

"But these Indians," he glanced contemptuously into the cañon, "they ain't bad. Course, they ain't rightly got no business here off'n their reservation, but

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they don't mean no harm. It's jest a huntin'-party. They sneak off and come over 'bout this time every year; then they mosey back with a bunch of turkeys and enough deer hides to do 'em for moccasins and such endurin' the balance of the season."

Dunning frowned. It wasn't over a month back that he'd been sworn in as deputy State game-warden, on instructions from Forest Headquarters. The game conservationists in the cities had somehow brought sufficient pressure to bear to get such orders sent to rangers throughout the West. Dunning had deplored the plan, for he knew that locally there was no attempt by State officials to enforce the game-laws; he knew the feeling of settlers in the Mogollons in respect to interference with their inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of furred and feathered denizens of the forest. And he felt certain that an attempt on his part to strictly interpret the law would receive scant backing from authority, and—what was more important—he would be hampered through resultant unpopularity in his administration of the forest resources of his district.

So, while he was aware a certain amount of hunting was going on in and out of season, he didn't go out of his way to encounter the hunters so long as they killed merely for food and were *bona fide* residents of the region.

But this matter of the Indians was different. It gave him pause, as some bygone humorist has phrased it.

"How many did you count?" he asked the boy.

"They was thirty head all told. I was jest finishin' the tally when you come along."

Dunning surveyed his young informant thoughtfully. The boy looked back at him gravely, with the calm assurance of a man.

"Do you think," the ranger asked, "that you could trail that bunch a while till we came up with them tonight when they camp?"

"O' course I could," the boy answered, "but I ain't aimin' to, because I done promised paw to git back before sundown an' cut up a stack of wood. Paw's been right puny last week or so. Howsomever, if you was wantin' to meet up with them bucks, I kin tell you where to find 'em, come night."

"Where is that?"

"It's in the cave down toward the mouth of the Animas—what the Mexicans calls the Cave of the Spirits. Them Indians has been goin' there for I dunno how long. They go there the last night of their huntin' and have a jamboree. Leastways, that's what folks says—I ain't never watched them."

Dunning seemed relieved. He smiled at his informant.

"That'll do fine," he said. "Some other time, when you're not busy and I need a scout, I'll have to call on you. But you haven't told me your name nor where you live!"

The boy pointed with his rifle westward along the ridge.

"Me and paw live up yonder, nigh Cold Springs. We're homesteaders. My name's Dick Carter."

"No relation to the well-known Nick Carter, are you?" Dunning asked with a smile.

Dick nodded eagerly.

"That's paw," he cried; "I thought mebbe you'd heard of him. He's a sure enough old-timer!"

"Yes," said Dunning, grave-faced, "I've heard of him."

THE ranger's immediate destination was the fire lookout station on Red Peak, to which "Windy Jake," the fire-guard, had been assigned for the Summer. The month was April, and the fire season was being ushered in by clear, warm days and a gradual drying out of humus and ground litter, soaked through by the melting snow of the Winter past.

Windy boasted a comfortable log cabin—a boon, for the nights were yet chilly. His days were spent in the little clearing at the summit of the peak, commanding on three sides a view of many miles of forest territory. Here he sat through the hours of daylight, watching for the thin column of smoke which meant a forest-fire.

Dunning found his friend bending over a struggling little blaze built in the open, busied with preparations for supper. To the ranger, wearied from his long ride, the fragrant odor of coffee, the savory smell of bacon, the sight of the smoke-blackened Dutch oven, wherein lay slowly browning the biscuits for which Windy was famous, seemed grateful indeed.

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It was an hour or more, after justice had been done the meal, before Dunning unburdened his mind to his companion.

He recounted then in detail his meeting with the boy, Dick Carter, and the appearance of the Indian hunters.

"And the kid says," he concluded, "that they'll be camped tonight at a cave in Animas Cañon—the Cave of the Spirits. Do you know where that is?"

Windy nodded.

"I been there," he admitted.

"Well, you know I'm a deputy game-warden," went on Dunning, "and these Indians have been hunting on my district. I've got to do something about it."

Windy gazed reflectively at the fire, stroking one end of a mustache that trailed like Spanish moss down over his gaunt jaw.

"What you figgerin' on doin'?" he queried mildly.

"If I can tear you away from the fire here long enough, I thought I'd get you to pilot me down to the cave and gather in the malefactors."

The fire-guard glanced quizzically at his superior.

"Ain't that kind of a man-size order you're bitin' off?" he drawled.

"For the time being," replied Dunning, "I'm the U. S. Government. There isn't any job I wouldn't tackle with the law behind me."

"Trouble is, you might find it too far behind you," objected Windy. "And it might catch up only in time to sing a sad song over what was once a young feller which took hisself too serious. Whyn't you leave them bucks be? They ain't done no harm—jest kilt a mess of game for theirselves. Tomorrow or next day they'll hit the trail, and that'll be the end of it. You best not mix in."

"They've broken the game-laws," said Dunning stiffly, "and I'm sworn to enforce them. If you'd rather not go——"

"Sho!" the lank mountaineer broke in. "Don't go 'way mad! If you're sot on goin' to the cave, I'll take you there—*pronto*."

He knocked the ashes from his pipe, raised his six-feet-three of angularity upright and stretched himself.

"I'll whistle up old Blue," he said, "and we kin start out whenever you've a mind to. No, I wouldn't wonder it 'twas right entertainin' of a expedition, afore we git through."

IT WAS a difficult trail they followed by the dim starlight. Downhill all the way, more steeply so as they plunged into brush as the trail left the ridge and led down the sheer sides of the Animas.

At length they gained the bottom, where the little creek fled eastward toward the plains. Windy Jake, in the lead, pulled up and waited till his companion came abreast.

"Yonder," he said in a hoarse whisper, pointing ahead, "is where the cañon boxes up. The cave's to the right. We'd best leave our hosses here and go on afoot."

They found the cave mouth easily, a round, black opening in the rock wall some eight feet in diameter. There was no sign of the Indians, no horses, no guard.

Dunning was mystified.

"They couldn't have taken their ponies in with them," he whispered.

Windy Jake was examining the ground before the cave's mouth.

"They's a rumor," he said at length, straightening, "that these Indians have got another way to git in here—or git out. If that's the truth, they've mebbe left their hosses there; p'raps that's where they went in. They's no tracks here, anyway."

"Let's go in," Dunning decided, "and see what we find."

They entered the tunnel, the ranger now leading. He had the pocket electric lamp he always carried, and the faint disk of illumination proved useful now, for they could make out the floor of the passage some feet ahead; more dimly, the walls and ceiling.

As they moved along cautiously, they found that the tunnel grew gradually smaller. Fifty yards or so from the entrance they walked bent nearly double. A little farther on they were forced to crawl on hands and knees. Then they were full length on the ground, pushing themselves forward with elbows and knees.

Dunning began to wonder if there had been any mistake; if the way they had come was a blind alley. He lay still, listening, his head turned sideways. The roof of the narrow passage touched his back. He thought of the tons on tons of earth above, a mountain of it. A panicky feeling came over him.

He heard Windy's grumbling voice behind him.

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"This here thorofare must 've been built for snakes," the thin fire-guard complained. "If 'twas any smaller, why, I couldn't git through!"

Dunning could not repress a chuckle of amusement. Then the laugh died in his throat. A sound came from ahead, the eery rise and fall of a barbaric chant. The ranger drew a deep breath and propelled himself forward. The passage a few yards farther made a turn, after which it widened considerably. A murky glow shone now at the end of the tunnel ahead. Dunning kept to one side of the passage, crawling forward by inches. Then at last he was at the edge of the opening.

He thrust his head forward and peered out. Instead of being flush with the floor, as he expected, the orifice seemed high in the wall. It opened upon a spacious chamber, circular in shape, the roof lost in darkness. The floor, he saw as he looked closer, was some six feet beneath him.

A fire in the center of the room lit the scene with a dim red glow, its smoke rising straight, as if drawn by a draft from some unseen opening far above. About the fire were dancing the Indians he sought. They moved in a slow and jerky rhythm, voicing meanwhile the weird chant that had before reached his ears.

Dunning heard a whisper in his ears.

"What now?" came the fire-guard's cautious voice.

For answer the ranger suddenly swung out and dropped his legs over the edge of the opening, raising his automatic as he did so and calling sharply to the dancers to stop.

The chant ceased abruptly. The dancers stood stock-still, faces impassive, but with glittering eyes fixed on the intruder as if he were an apparition. Their weapons, Dunning had noted in his first quick glance, were piled in a corner of the room. But they showed no disposition to dispute his orders.

One of the bucks, a tall savage of fine presence, stepped forward and spoke quietly in Spanish.

"What does he say?" Dunning asked Windy.

"Wants to know what you're buttin' in on the *baile* for," was the fire-guard's free interpretation.

"Tell him I'm a Government officer," directed Dunning. "Tell him he's been hunting without a license, which is against the law, and that he and his friends are under arrest."

Windy burst into fluent speech.

The tall Indian looked puzzled; then he drew a folded paper from his belt. He proffered it to Dunning, not without dignity, and the ranger, puzzled in his turn, opened it and gazed wonderingly at the contents. He read:

> Running Elk and party has a right to hunt in the Black Range until further notice, provided I get some of the turkey and venison.
>
> ALF. TURNER, Counsel.

Dunning's impulse was to laugh. The cheek of this amazing document was ludicrous. Yet the result of its issuance might well be the reverse of amusing. The ranger knew Turner for a disbarred lawyer who made Mogollon his headquarters and maintained a precarious foothold on life by means too devious for the ordinary intelligence to follow. His chief vocation was drinking, and his avocation, when in funds, was poker. He was seldom observed eating or sleeping.

Dunning slowly folded the paper and thrust it in his pocket. Then he turned to Windy.

"Tell this Indian," he said bruskly, "that he's been cheated. This is a fake permit. Tell him I want him and his friends to leave their guns and other unnecessary stuff here and go into Mogollon with me. Ask him if he'll give me his word to go in peaceably."

As the demand was made clear to him, Running Elk nodded acquiescence and spoke shortly to the band of Indians, who stood waiting, patient and immobile, for an end to the colloquy. Dunning was distinctly relieved when it became plain that the Indians were prepared, deeming themselves innocent of wrong-doing, to abide by his instructions.

Almost immediately they began to crawl out, one by one, through the same tunnel by which Windy and the ranger had found ingress. If there were another exit, as rumor said, the Apaches gave no sign that such existed. And Dunning did not question them, for he was only too glad that his adventure had thus far developed without friction.

He had looked upon the arrest as the most difficult feature of his task, but it wasn't long after he reached Mogollon

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with his accommodating prisoners before he discovered that taking them into custody might prove to be the simplest phase of his attempt to enforce the game-laws without fear or favor. A premonition came to him that, like the hunter who snared a wandering Indian buck in his bear trap, he might find more difficulty in turning his captives loose than in catching them.

The Indians had picked up their ponies and game, hidden in the woods a short distance from the cave's mouth, before riding in to town. They halted at the ranger station, at the north end of Mogollon's single street, and the ranger bade them camp in the pasture back of the cabin, where there was water and plenty of room, until such time as he could arrange to turn them over to the sheriff.

THEN he called up his supervisor at Silver City. The resulting conversation was highly unsatisfactory, from Dunning's point of view. Supervisor Barnes, while he could not very well reprimand his subordinate for heeding the clear call of duty as a State game-warden, implied unmistakably that the situation brought about by the youth's zeal was awkward. He gave no definite instructions but expressed the hope that the ranger would turn over the culprits to proper authority without delay and without in any way jeopardizing Federal interests in the district. Dunning hoped, perhaps even more fervently, the very same thing.

The supervisor promised to communicate with the agent at the Apache reservation at once. Then he rang off.

Dunning left the 'phone, feeling a trifle discomposed. He tried to cheer himself with a bad joke.

"If I'm not mistaken," he grinned feebly, "the old man has checkmated my attempt to pass the bucks!"

Then he got the office of the sheriff on the wire. It did not aid his unrest to learn that that official was in Socorro, the county-seat, and was not expected back for a week or ten days. He began to experience an uneasiness approaching alarm. How could he attend to his manifold duties with that bunch of Indians in the back-yard? With fire season coming on! How could he feed them, keep them satisfied to wait till the sheriff returned?

He wished then that Windy were with him. But the fire-guard had taken his departure where the trail branched for Red Peak, for of all the ranger's duties the most vital was to leave no chance for forest-fire to get the jump on him.

He could, of course, call Windy up. He was considering this move when a knock sounded on the door of his cabin.

"Come in," called Dunning.

The door opened inward, and the round, guileless countenance of Alf Turner appeared in the opening. He was a fat little man with pop eyes and a solemn expression. His face at the moment seemed a little more flushed than usual, a sign, the ranger hoped, of natural, rather than excessive, artificial, emotion.

"Morning, Turner," said Dunning; "have a chair. I'm glad you came around. I wanted to see you."

"Can't stop long," growled the other in a deep bass voice that came oddly from his deceptively childlike physiognomy. "I got to get out back and talk with them Indians. I heard you'd brought 'em in. What's the idea?"

Dunning's choler rose at the ex-lawyer's offensive manner, at his pure gall. Possession of the law-breakers, a moment before so unwelcome a responsibility, seemed now well worth a fight.

The ranger drew out and unfolded the bogus permit surrendered by Running Elk and read it aloud for his visitor's benefit.

"I think before we go any further," he said, "you'd better tell me what the idea is of this alleged license to break the game-laws, signed by you."

Turner waved his hand airily and smiled, an operation which did not improve his appearance. His teeth, those that remained, were yellow and tusklike; the leering lines in his face transformed it to a mask of evil craftiness.

"Just a little friendly business transaction," he chuckled throatily. "Like when the doc slips you a bread pill and takes two dollars to call it square. Of course, the paper's no good—we know that. But those bucks think it is; so it's worth what I charge them in hides and fresh meat. We been operatin' the system now for some years, and it's worked out satisfactorily for all concerned till you butted in."

"Suppose the agent at the reservation knew about it?"

Turner's round eyes bulged more than ever.

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"You don't imagine he doesn't? Why, Sam Bailey put me on to it first off, when I located here. Sent the Indians to see me when they came over. I sort of keep tabs on 'em in case they should get into trouble or anything. It's a good thing, too, in more ways than one—when they know they're watched, they ain't half so li'ble to get into no mischief."

Dunning received this matter-of-fact explanation with considerable astonishment.

"Do you mean to say the agent countenances these hunting trips, lets the Indians leave the reservation—break the game-laws over here——"

"Shucks!" broke in Turner. "Of course he does—long as nobody much knows it. It don't do any real harm, and it gives the bucks something to look forward to—keeps 'em satisfied with life like. What's the odds?"

He rose as if the discussion were concluded.

"I knew you weren't on to the game, or you wouldn't have made the break of arrestin' them Indians. So I thought I'd just explain the idea to you—frank. Because the first thing you know, if you ain't got nobody to advise you, you'd be gettin' into politics."

The conviction with which Turner voiced the horror of this contingency might have been amusing, but there was, Dunning knew, enough truth behind it to overcome the humor of its implication.

"I'll just go out and tell the hunting-party to highball," added the little "counsel." "If they vamoose now, they can get back before the incident's public property, and they won't be any harm done."

"Hold on," warned Dunning sharply, as the other turned to go; "those Indians are in my custody. I'm a State deputy game-warden, sworn to enforce the law. I'm also an officer of the Federal Government. If any of those Indians attempt to escape before I've handed them over to the sheriff, I'll hold you personally responsible. And that goes!"

Turner abruptly seated himself once more. He stared at the ranger in amazement. His face became suddenly suffused; the tiny distended veins in nose and cheeks glowed purple.

"Are you plumb loco—or what?" he demanded.

"What, I guess," grinned Dunning, whom a crisis always drove to excessive cheerfulness; "that is, if that indicates that I mean what I say!"

The lawyer leaned forward, enunciating impressively.

"Don't be a —— fool!" he said. "You think you've got the Gov'ment behind you—but the Gov'ment isn't bothering overly much about what happens in Mogollon, whereas they's a lot of other fellers, much closer to here, which is. I ain't sayin' they'll come out in the open and say so—or that they'll interfere with your Indians, because that might be brought home to 'em. But they's other ways. Fire season's about here. What would be the natural comeback if local people got the notion that you were in earnest about trying to stop huntin'? If they thought you was settin' out to fight 'em?"

At this thinly veiled threat of reprisal Dunning's blood grew hot. He rose on the instant.

"I'll remember what you said, Turner," he cried, trying to keep his voice even, "if any unexplained fires occur. And now—I need that chair!"

The little man rose slowly, his face twisted in a scowl of malignancy. As he reached the door, he turned and shook his clenched fist.

"You'll have a reason to remember," he snarled, "before you're a great deal older."

DUNNING'S anger cooled quickly. And with reflection came a recurrence of the premonition that he had worked himself into a dilemma which threatened unpleasant developments. But he was in for it now and meant to see it through. He had by no means as yet lost faith in the majesty of the law or in the prestige of the Government he served.

He would not even consult Windy Jake. He'd brought the situation about himself, he knew, and he determined to solve his problem alone. So he ordered a supply of food for the Indians, explained to Running Elk the necessity of their remaining as his guests until the return of the sheriff and went about his business.

It was soon plain to him that some one, whom he had no trouble in deciding was Turner, had been at pains to fill the ears and heads of the local population with sundry facts—or alleged facts—concerning

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his plans as game-warden. Some things he overheard; others came to him directly as questions or blunt accusations. He met hostile eyes where before he had been sure of friends; he felt an undercurrent of suspicion, if not actual enmity, wherever he went. More disturbing still, he found difficulty in arranging for the usual co-operation on the part of forest users during fire season, always a chief feature of the fire plan.

Then early in the morning, on the third day following Turner's visit to the station, Dunning was wakened from sound slumber by the "howler" on his telephone, whose sounding meant that some one had cut in on the line with one of the Service portable outfits and desired immediate and urgent speech with him.

He was at the receiver instantly.

"Hello!" he cried sleepily. "Hello!"

The drawling voice of Windy Jake reached his ears.

"Thought I'd call you up," said the voice. "Had to leave the peak to put out a little fire——"

"A fire!"

The exclamation was involuntary, drawn from Dunning by the shock of this unexpected news. He couldn't understand it, though he was wide awake enough now. The time of fire danger was still two weeks or more away. None of the patrols were out; only on one or two of the primary lookouts, such as Red Peak, were men stationed. And there had been no thunderstorms, no Summer campers—it was unbelievable!

"A fire was what I said," came Windy's corroborative drawl; "seems funny this time o' year. But what's funnier yet, I got here in time to find out that some feller set it—you kin jest put down 'human agency' in your little book."

"Where are you now?" Dunning inquired crisply.

"Down in the Turkey Creek country, five miles south of the peak. I seen the smoke soon's it got light and hit the trail *pronto*. The ground ain't dried out right good yet, and I got here before she got blazin' much. That's how come I found they'd stacked up brush and set her off. But, what come into my mind—it'll take me a good two hours or better to get back up on the ridge, and, if there's somebody tryin' to start somethin'——"

"I'll ride on out to the peak now," Dunning broke in, "and keep watch there till you get back."

He snapped up the receiver and saddled his horse in feverish haste, without a thought of breakfast, with no thought at all save that his forest was in danger; that the hills and cañons now carpeted with foliage might shortly be but a bare expanse of dead sticks—charred bones where now was life in green profusion.

He rode hard, heading north at first, then eastward down the Red Peak trail. Dew, still on the bushes, sprinkled him as he touched the limbs of overhanging trees. The sun in a cloudless sky crept slowly up above the ridge ahead. A little breeze from the north fanned his cheek as he rode, whispering among the tree tops, swaying the branches gently. Dunning prayed fervently that it might grow no stronger or cease.

The sorrel pricked up his ears. Dunning glanced ahead at the warning movement. There in the trail like a quaint woodland elf was the boy who had called himself Dick Carter, the son of Nick.

He was walking quickly toward the ranger, with a long, soft-footed stride like an Indian's. The father of guns he carried diagonally across his shoulder. His face glowed with excitement.

As he caught sight of Dunning, he waved his free arm and broke into a dog-trot. The ranger felt a sickening foreboding.

"What is it?" he cried as they approached each other, "What's the matter?"

"Fire!" panted the boy, stopping suddenly. His breath came in gasps, and sweat was dripping from his forehead. "She's broke out on the ridge north of the Animas, this side of the Rio Puerco. I seen the smoke and went over to tell Windy Jake, but he wasn't at the lookout. Then I went back—thought I could mebbe put her out. But by then she was goin' too strong."

"What was it—brush or crown fire?"

"It hadn't got into the tops yet—jest brush an' saplings. If paw'd been home, we could have handled her, I wouldn't wonder. But he's gone prospectin' for a week or such a matter. So I started on in to tell you."

"Good boy," said Dunning abstractedly. He was thinking rapidly, planning the fight he knew was ahead. "Look here, Dick,"

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he said, dismounting quickly as he spoke, "you take my horse and ride in to the general store at Mogollon and ask for Homer Barrett—know him?"

"Yes—o' course!"

"Tell him to get a bunch of fire-fighters, chuck, plenty of gunnysacks—there'll be water out here. Tell him to burn the wind out to Animas Cañon!"

"All right." The boy was already in the saddle, eager to be off.

"And, Dick," Dunning added, "did you notice any signs? Could you tell how the fire started?"

The boy's eyes grew wide as he noted Dunning's expression.

"You think it was lit?"

"I don't know—I hope not. But I have reason to think—listen, Dick! You say you're a good trailer. After the men get going, you scout around and, if you cut into any trail that looks suspicious, follow it. If you see Turner, the lawyer, watch him specially. I'm putting you on fire-fighting wages from this morning. But, if there's been any funny business about the way this thing started and you help me to land the man—well, I'll not forget you!"

The boy nodded comprehension and leaned forward in the saddle. He was off in a high lope.

Dunning turned and walked swiftly up the trail in the direction of the fire.

Soon the acrid odor of smoke stung his nostrils, and, as he came out on the ridge south of the Animas, he saw billowing clouds that rose like vast balloons above the creeping red line on the opposite slope.

Fire burns down-hill slowly, swiftly on the up-grade. If they could stop this blaze at the creek, little damage would be done, for, as the boy had reported, it was so far a brush fire only, and the timber on the north slope was scant. But, if the flames jumped the Animas and started up the southern side of the cañon with the wind behind, it might mean a crown fire. And that would mean surely devastation for miles along the thickly timbered ridges that stretched away, forty miles and more, to the south.

All this Dunning saw at a glance, for he had been trained in the strategy and tactics of fire-fighting as is a soldier in the wars of men. And, seeing this, he made his way as quickly as possible along the ridge, through brush, over vine-covered rocks and abattis of dead and down trees, in a frantic endeavor to reach the point of danger in advance of the encroaching flames.

Near the mouth of the cañon, where scrub and brush oak grew thickest, the fire had made greatest headway. A little this side of the box, still on the southern ridge, Dunning halted. He had not descended into the cañon sooner, because from the top he could obtain a much better idea of the fire's progress; also, he was less bothered by the clouds of smoke the little wind carried eastward across the chasm.

But now the ranger saw plainly that, if his efforts were to be of any present use, he must descend to the stream and endeavor to do what he could to fight off the fire single-handed until the arrival of the crew from Mogollon. This was not so hopeless a task as it sounds. The line of red flames was now three-quarters of the way down the northern slope. Dunning's plan was to make his stand in Animas Creek and with pine limbs, wet in the stream, to beat out the fire as it reached that break in the forest cover.

He began the steep descent cautiously enough, but, as he progressed, the sight of the steady, relentless march of the flames drove him to take chances to increase his speed. Faster and more recklessly he worked downward, slipping, sliding, bruised by hidden rocks, torn by twigs and thorns.

He was nearly down—not more than a hundred feet to go—when the disaster his method courted arrived. As he lost his footing for the hundredth time, he threw himself impatiently forward to regain his balance; his ankle lodged in the loop of a trailing root, and he shot forward headlong down the precipitous grade.

He burst through the wall of brush remaining, rolled over and over and hurtled through the air over a short cliff that rose from the cañon bed. A moment he fell sprawling through space, then crashed with stunning force into the stony bed of the creek.

DUNNING'S return to consciousness was abrupt and unpleasant. He found himself choking, gasping for breath. At first he thought it was the waters of the Animas that strangled him; then he realized that he was lying with his head and shoulders on the bank, only his

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limbs in the shallow stream. As the mist left his mind, he knew suddenly that it was smoke which suffocated him, burned his throat and nostrils and eyes. It swirled about him in thick slow-moving clouds, which shut out his surroundings on every side.

At the same moment the thought came that the fire must be close at hand, for the heat, beating against him in waves, was terrific. He squirmed about and soused his head in the creek, but, as he did so, a pain shot through his right leg, a sharp stab to which his former distress was as nothing.

Instinctively he wet his handkerchief and tied it about mouth and nose. As he did so, a grateful coolness struck his brow. The breeze had freshened and changed direction. It was coming from the west now, directly down the creek. The smoke clouds lifted for a moment, and Dunning saw through the thinning curtain the red light of flames driving down toward him.

The fire, as he had surmised, was almost upon him. All idea of stopping its progress, in his present state of helplessness, he knew must be abandoned. Indeed, his situation was precarious; he did not see how he was to escape suffocation or a worse death from the fire.

His gaze shifted to the south wall of the cañon, near which he lay. The cliff from whose top he had been hurled rose sheer and blank. Then suddenly his heart leaped. In the wall of rock some five yards below him was a round black opening, eight feet or more in diameter—the entrance to the Cave of the Spirits.

Heartened by hope, when before his plight had seemed hopeless, the ranger dragged himself from the water and crawled slowly toward the opening. His leg was helpless, broken or badly sprained, and every movement gave him excruciating pain. But he persisted, for there was really nothing else to do—but quit, and Dunning had no thought of that.

After an interminable time he reached the opening and started to work his way along the tunnel. The puff of wind had ceased, and the smoke rolled into the passage like gas into a dug-out. Dunning redoubled his efforts, for he knew that, until he reached the large chamber at the end with its hidden draft of pure air, he would be in constant danger of being overcome—of stifling in the narrow way like a gopher in its hole.

If the first journey he had made through the bowels of the mountain had been arduous, this time the trip was a nightmare. How many times he paused, faint and nauseated with pain, struggling for scant breath, he did not know. But it seemed years, ages, before he finally squeezed through the needle's eye of the passage and emerged into the comparatively clean atmosphere of the chamber at the end.

He lay for a time in a semiconscious state, sucking in great gulps of cool air. Then, reviving somewhat, his mind turned to the hazards of his position. It wasn't an enviable one, even now, though immediate danger was past. But how long it would take the fire to burn over and leave the egress safe, Dunning could not tell; long enough, he suspected, for his leg to stiffen so that movement would be out of the question. And in the meantime he must lie there without food, without water, waiting for an improbable rescue.

As time passed, the lack of water grew to be the most pressing of his needs. His thirst began gradually to pass all bounds. His throat felt raw; his tongue burned and swollen. A fever accompanied this, a throbbing heat in his head which made him fear delirium.

Grim fancies attacked him, born of his condition and of the place—the Cave of the Spirits. Almost he imagined that he heard whispers, the movement of soft bodies in the chamber, the scraping of something on the dirt floor of the room. And suddenly, with a quick return to full consciousness, he was made aware by a thrilling of his nerves that he was not alone.

Scarcely had this conviction impressed him with full certainty of its truth when the scratch of a match sounded. The ranger was lying on the ledge where the tunnel opened into the cave. He had not dared try the six-foot drop to the floor, even if there had been utility in so doing. And now his eyes, roving in the close blackness, saw a huddled figure in the center of the room, revealed dimly in the faint light from the flaring match.

This person, his back to Dunning, was in process of lighting a fire, ready prepared for the action. As the blaze spread from twigs and pine shavings to the pile of heaped up wood, he sat back on his haunches, watching the result of his handiwork.

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DUNNING, after his first shock of wonderment, felt an intense relief. Here, where he had least hoped for it, was succor. He did not pause to consider the strangeness of the man's appearance here—the possibility of his being one whom he would not willingly have met, alone, helpless. His eyes fixed on the canteen at the other's belt; he was just conscious of the greatness of his need. He tried to cry out, to make known his predicament, but his swollen tongue and lips made a bad job of it. An inarticulate sound of distress was all he could manage.

The man by the fire sprang upright and swung toward the sound, snatching a Colt from its holster with a movement lightning swift.

"Who's that?" he challenged. "Who-all's there?"

"Give me a drink," Dunning articulated thickly; I'm hurt—the fire——"

The man stepped quickly, but with a cautious tread, toward the ranger. He unslung the canteen and raised it to the youth's lips. Dunning thought that moment the most precious of his life.

"You can't walk, I don't reckon?" asked the stranger gruffly.

"No," replied Dunning; "it's all I can do to crawl. I wouldn't have tried that, only there's a forest-fire outside—the smoke was suffocating me. It was all I could do to get here."

The man grunted. So far his face was in darkness; Dunning perceived only that he was big and bearded, clad in woodsman's clothes. His head, as he stood on the cave floor, rose level with the ledge whereon the ranger lay.

He remained a moment considering; then he said:

"I'll have to fix you up, I reckon. Crawl ahead as far as you kin. I'll ketch you."

Dunning did as he was bid. When he reached the edge, the woodsman put huge arms about him and bore him gently, for all his brusk demeanor, to the fire.

He picked two straight sticks from a pile of firewood near the wall, cut strips from one of the deer hides that lay with the heaped up paraphernalia left by the Indian hunters and proceeded to fashion a rough but effective splint for the ranger's hurt limb. This done, he squatted down by the fire and surveyed the youth with an expression of marked disfavor.

"You're the ranger from over to Mogollon, I reckon," he growled.

"Yes," said Dunning, too comfortable now, in contrast to his late agony, to be critical of the other's tone or manner.

"The feller," went on the stranger, "who's a-goin' to stop huntin' hereabouts."

Dunning was instantly alert.

"Who told you that?" he demanded.

"I ain't tellin'," replied the other grimly, "but I'll jest hand you a tip: you best give up the idea—while you're healthy!"

A defiant retort trembled on Dunning's lips, but, ere it was voiced, he saw his companion stiffen, his head go up in the attitude of one who listens. A scraping sounded, apparently from the wall opposite the tunnel by which the ranger had entered. Then from the shadows there crawled forth a short stout figure, which straightened and stood erect, brushing dirt from coat and trousers.

Dunning gasped as the newcomer reached the circle of firelight. The visitor was Alf Turner, the disbarred lawyer, his entrance obviously the secret passage which Windy Jake had referred to.

Turner nodded to the woodsman with curt familiarity; then he peered sharply at Dunning. His eyes, unaccustomed to the light, for a moment blinked owlishly. An exclamation of amazement escaped him.

He stood staring and began to grin slowly, with a malice in the lines of his fat face more terrible than wholesome wrath. Finally he turned to the silent woodsman.

"How'd he get here?" he snapped.

The other told him succinctly.

Turner nodded slowly, seemingly in a brown study the while. And, in the pause which punctuated the narrative, Dunning grew cold, so evil were the round cherubic features of the little man. And it came to the ranger suddenly who was responsible for the mysterious forest-fires. He was sure in his own mind that Turner had planned them, and he felt equally sure that this morose stranger was the tool which the lawyer had used to carry out his policy of projected intimidation.

The lawyer spoke once more, and his words made Dunning's suspicion certainty.

"This young feller," said Turner, glancing tentatively at the woodsman, "has got no business here. But, since he is here, well—it'd be a good place for him to stay. We can't take no chance of him gossipin'

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about seein' us here—together. Especially at just this particular time."

The bearded stranger stirred uneasily.

"If I take you rightly, Turner," he said slowly, "you mean murder—an' that ain't in our contrack. I was willin' to fight for my rights—I am yet. But settin' a forest-fire is one thing, an' murder——"

An oath escaped Turner. With face blazing furiously, he whipped out an automatic and covered his partner. His eyes seemed red in the firelight.

"It's him or us now," barked the lawyer, "an', if you're goin' to quit on me—it's me against you two!"

The stranger gazed calmly up at the little man, apparently without seeing the levelled gun at all.

"I reckon," he drawled, "I didn't reelize jest what a yaller-hearted skunk you was, Turner. But, now that I do, why, I reckon you kin jest about go to——"

"Hands up!"

The command came sharp, decisive, from the blackness of the wall behind Turner, the wall through which he had seemed to crawl magically on entering. At the summons the lawyer whirled, cursing, and his gun spat twice. Like an echo to the crack of his automatic came a roaring, reverberating explosion which shook the room and rang in the ears of its occupants. The lawyer screamed and pitched forward, stone-dead.

The big woodsman had leaped upright at the sound of the hidden voice, a look of horror crossing his face. As he stood, a slender figure emerged swayingly from the gloom, a long, old-fashioned piece clutched tightly in stiffening fingers, and a boyish voice came quaveringly:

"I follered him here, like the ranger told me. I seen him coverin' you, dad. I ought to of shot sooner. I'm afraid he got me."

With a hoarse cry the man sprang forward in time to catch the limp form of Dick Carter as it slumped down into his arms. And, with this tableau as his last conscious impression, the overwrought Dunning lapsed into sudden and complete oblivion.

WHEN he came to himself, the ranger stared about him, puzzled, for his surroundings were not those he recalled just before nightfall, and the pale sky was visible through waving tree tops. Dunning was lying on a pile of blankets at the edge of the timber. He felt quite comfortable, with scarcely any pain.

A camp-fire was burning cozily a few yards away. The silent figure beside it, smoking, Dunning recognized as Windy Jake. The knowledge brought a feeling of intense relief.

At the youth's first movement the fire-guard rose and came over beside him. The familiar smile twitched the drooping mustache and twinkled in Windy's deep-set eyes.

" 'Bout time you come alive," he growled. "Want some coffee?"

Dunning did, but he wanted some information first.

"Young Dick," he asked; "he was shot—in the cave. Was—was he badly hurt?"

"Fair to middlin'. Turner got him through the shoulder. His ole man drug him out through that private passage he'd discovered and run into some of the fire-fighters goin' down to the Animas, an' they holp him carry the boy up to their cabin. Ole Nick happened to mention that you was in the cave yet; so, after telephonin' in to town for the doc to come out, I went back with a couple of fellers an' got you up here out of the zone of trouble, as you might call it. Your leg's broke, all right, seems like; so I figgered I'd rest here till the doc came and set it. Then we kin git you up to the lookout station for a spell till you're able to ride in to town."

"But about Dick—there's no danger?"

"Shucks, no! He'll be around before you, I wouldn't wonder. With them names of theirn, them two, him an' his father, ought to have a plenty of adventures yet. If you was a writer, you could write a new set of dime novels about them—an' they tell me dime novels brings a dollar four-bits each, nowadays; it ought to be right profitable of a enterprise!"

"How about the fire?" Dunning asked. "I was afraid if it got on the south ridge——"

"She's under control now, though at first it looked kind of dubyus. We got there jest about in time. I run into the fellows from Mogollon as they were gettin' into action, an', with what we could do an' a lucky change in the wind, we kep' her on the north side of the creek. An', while I'm passin' out inf'rmation so's you kin get all these probullums off'n your mind at

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once, I'll tell you that the supervisor called up this mornin' and said to leave the Indians go.

"The agent got in touch with him and said he'd take care of the case if you'd leave 'em go and head 'em for home. I wouldn't wonder if that was what took Turner out here to the cave, for to have a conferens with old Carter. It looks like they was workin' together in this fire-settin' business—at least that's the way I got it doped, though they ain't no reel proof."

Dunning knew that he had proof, and the knowledge troubled him. Yet no one save himself and Carter—possibly the boy—were aware of the fact.

"I saw Turner shot," he said, half to himself. "He was killed, wasn't he?"

"Mortally," returned Windy, "and buried. And they was no mourners. If they was anybody mainly responsible for these fires, I'd say that Turner could easy take most of the blame. Was you thinking of leavin' it that way?"

There was a serious note in the fire-guard's voice. He had touched the point on which Dunning's judgment was centered.

"If Nick Carter set those fires," he said, "even though he thought he was fighting for his rights, he'd be guilty, according to law, of a very serious offense—"

Windy broke in testily.

"Young feller," he said, "the longer you reside in this here neck of the woods the better you'll reelize that they's a atterbute which antedates and offen takes preceedence of law hereabouts."

"And that is?"

"That," said Windy, "is common sense."

Dunning smiled.

"I had thought," he said slowly, "of asking to be relieved of my job of game-warden, on the ground that it tends to interfere with the efficient execution of my duties as forest-ranger. I had thought, also, of usurping the prerogatives of the court and reserving judgment in the case of Nick Carter. I had considered, finally, putting him on as fire-guard this season, if he'll take the job, and of giving young Dick a try-out as fire patrol, with a little coaching from myself on the side to enable him to take the ranger examinations at Silver City when he gets the proper age. What's your idea of that plan?"

"My idee," said Windy Jake, looking him fair in the eyes, "is that, if you keep on the way you've begun, you'll be a regular old-timer before you know it. Will you have some coffee?"

Dunning thought he would.

AFRICANS AND MONKEYS

by THOMAS S. MILLER

THE sentinel monkey peered down from his high rock with alert suspicion. My gun-bearer, "Twelve o'Clock"—how he got that name was a mystery—proceeded to enlighten me on the origin of monkeys.

"De goo *ju-ju*," he said, meaning God, "make man. Him debil *ju-ju* heap big jealous; he think him all-same smart as good *ju-ju*. He go to make man, and he make monkey."

Such was Twelve o'Clock's genesis of the monkey species. But I think that was his own invention, or at the most the fantasy of his particular village, for the generally accepted version among the blacks on the Niger is fabled thus:

"Now the fish in the river petitioned Allah to give them one day's rest from the men fishermen, that they might come out of the water and dance. And Allah ordered all men not to fish on every seventh day. But the men of one tribe disobeyed. They caught the dancing fish in their nets. Then Allah was angry and turned them into monkeys."

It isn't Darwinian and it calls for quite a degree of imagination for credence; but, after all, what's theology?

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Salt of the Sea

A Two-Part Story
Conclusion

by J. Allan Dunn

Author of "On the Account," "The Sign of the Skull," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

"STORM, I see. Storm and treachery and a sun of gold shining through the smoke. I see a great water on which ships sail to the westward. I see a mighty fleet attacked by tiny vessels. I see more leagues of ocean and a land where live unknown peoples. And I see strange deaths in far places, and strange adventures."

So spake my Uncle Zadik, the wizard, to Francis Drake, the mariner, before he sailed from England. And the blood leaped in my heart with a thrill as I heard.

For I was to sail with Drake. I, Aylwin Trevennion, was to voyage with the great admiral to the Spanish Main and the New World. So great seemed my good fortune that I could scarce believe it until the foggy morning on which our little fleet sailed out of Plymouth. Five good ships we had, too—the *Golden Hynde*, the *Elizabeth*, the *Swan*, the *Marygold* and the *Christopher*, on which I sailed under old Tom Moone.

Nor did we sail long before we learned how true was my uncle's prophecy. Great ships of Spain met us on the high seas. Led by our great admiral, we boarded them, and the scuppers ran with blood as we hacked the Don until he cried for mercy and gave over to us the gold and gems that lined his hold.

In these battles I wielded a lusty blade, for I had had training in fence from Angus, our master-at-arms, a dour Scot whom I liked. I also fenced daily with Gilbert, a young gentleman adventurer whose face was marked with a scar, and with Simon Reed, a sly fellow of evil countenance.

So I passed the time when there was fair weather, which was not always. For storms came up that racked our ship and nigh sent us to the bottom. Within were storms also, for one, Thomas Doughty, was guilty of the treachery my uncle had predicted. He would have turned the ships back to England when Drake had gone ashore on strange land. For this he was tried and condemned to death. He died by Drake's hand.

After this was no treachery. Southward we sailed and turned west, by the strait that Magellan had found, to the Pacific Ocean. More storms came to us here, and we lost the *Christopher*, the *Marygold* and the *Elizabeth*. Then, sailing north, we came, after many evil days, to land. Natives told us of a great river flowing from the inland, and Drake ordered Angus to take a party in search of it.

I went with Angus. In our party were Gilbert, Reed, Peter, a hunchback, who had been my uncle's assistant, a grizzled boatswain named Mordaunt and four sailors, Pike, Jonson, Law and Congreve. And I took my dog Neptune with me.

Singing and cheering, we set out for the unknown land.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE FOG

IT WAS midafternoon when we reached the gateway to the great harbor. It was only at this time of year, the Indians told us, that the fogs cleared away for many hours at a time. We might have sailed by the place a hundred times and never have suspected it. For, whenever there was any fog at all, so said our pilots, it streamed into the big bay through the neck of the entrance and, stoppering it, made it invisible from even a short way at sea.

But to us it showed plainly enough when once we marked its bearings. To the north towered the purple height of Tamal; to the south were low sand-hills and cliffs with rocks on which sprawled the sea-bears, or sea-slugs, as Angus styled them—great slithery beasts of which the males had tusks and all bore some resemblance to a savage face so that they might well have been thought mermen and mermaids, save for the fur that covered them. Seen gamboling in the water, with just the wet head and

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great eyes, they seemed for all the world like curious sea-people.

The current was setting in for the bay, and we were swiftly swept across the bar, where there was deep water and little surf, a good breeze behind us, borne on a tide that sped through the gate at six good miles an hour. To starboard the sand-hills were brave with purple and yellow flowers that set us thinking of the gorse at home on Devon moors. Low hills mounted to a high plain, and hung in the air very far away were domes and spires of snow, the lower slopes merged in the blue distance.

To larboard Mount Tamal, half in sun and half in dense shadow, was set with great trees like enormous firs, of which more anon. Islands were in this inland sea, sparkling like emeralds. As evening came, the fog stayed outside by reason of the great warmth of the day, banked up in masses through which the sun set in a golden glory.

We held a straight course in line with the channel and beached upon one of the isles, where the Indians showed us a spring. There we camped and made merry over a haunch of venison while the fog came in, moist and damp, making us hug the fire. That night Mordaunt sang the song of the "Mariner and the Mermaid." It was the last stave he sang for many a weary day.

"I'll spin ye the yarn of a gallant young mariner,
As likely a lad as e'er hauled in a sheet,
Who shipped him to India and married a furriner;
A princess she was, sir, of countenance sweet.

"She bore him twelve children, a wonderful family,
If longer he'd stayed, she'd have made it a score;
But William he pined for a sight of his Emily,
The lass he had left him at Plymouth ashore.

"He stole a canoe of the very best quality
And loaded it down to the gunwales with prog,
And then he sneaked off from his princess Tol-lol-ity,
And she drowned her sorrow in oceans of grog.

"A storm it come up, and the boat it was foundering
With William paddling and saying a prayer;
Then over it tips with the poor lad a-floundering
When something grabs Bill by the back of his hair.

"'Twas a mermaid who grabbed him and quickly imprisoned him
In a big coral cave in the depths of the sea.
Ten children they had and a tiger-shark christened 'em;
Now Bill strokes their tails as they dance on his knee.

"There's a moral to learn in this yarn of a mariner,
A sailor is foolish to ever get wed.
But, if ye must marry, don't splice to a furriner;
'Tis better by far to stay home in your bed."

Neptune woke me with a shove of his wet nose in my hand. The fog was all around us in a dim twilight. There was a fragrant smell of herbs from the bushes on the island, and the sail that covered us was wet with mist. Neptune whined uneasily, and I sat up. The fire was out. The dog seemed to insist that something was amiss, and I pulled on my boots and followed him back into the waist-high growths divided by a narrow runway. Through these I followed him close, losing him sometimes until he came trotting back to me with eager eyes.

Once we flushed some birds that went drumming away through the fog. The ground rose to a great hump, and over this we passed on and down to a narrow beach where the tide lapped softly at the last of the ebb. There, leading to the water, were the naked footprints of two men. I knew what had happened. For some reason our pilots had deserted us. I hurried back and found Angus busy with flint and steel and powder, making fire.

"We had best get away, Trevennion," he decided. "They seemed friendly, but they may covet the boat and have gone to get help. In this fog they could ambush us from sea or land and we none the wiser till a spear was in every man's ribs. Cold victuals for us and a quick shift."

We shoved off and cautiously rowed north by our compass. The fog began to lift, and a dull glow pierced it. Soon it had raised from the water so that we went beneath a canopy of shifting clouds. Presently it shredded and broke up into patches with a crisp sea between. Lanes opened before the broom of the wind, and we made shift to sail close-hauled to the breeze, breaking our fast as we went. Then the wind failed entirely, and the fog rolled down again from all sides. The sail was useless; so we took to our oars.

There was a slight bump of our keel, and the bow uptipped. We were on a shoal. Congreve and Pike sprang out and sank waist-deep in quicksand with yells of terror. We got them back and tried to fend off, to no purpose in the shifting, treacherous bottom. The tide was ebbing fast and, by the time we had succeeded in rescuing the men, we were stranded on the bank, powerless until the tide returned.

Once Neptune barked, and I muzzled him, telling him to be quiet. He stayed with paws on the gunwale, his nose wrinkling first to one quarter and then another.

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"Look to your primings," said Angus. "There are Indians about!"

We were walled in with the fog. A fathom away the slimy mud of the shoal was invisible, though astern we could hear the sucking noises of the retreating tide. We sat with our ears pricked in silence. If there were foes hidden from us, so were we from them, but it was a weird waiting. I made Neptune lie down on the bottom boards, though he whimpered quietly in protest at being taken off as sentinel.

I learned later that these Indians, being close to brutes, hold much of a brute's keen sense. And, even as Neptune scented them in that heavy, moist air, so they must have caught our odor and nosed us up what faint breath of wind there was. Without warning a flight of arrows whistled from the mist. One glanced off my corselet; another grazed Reed's wrist, and a full dozen quivered in the side of the boat, narrowly missing Neptune.

With one accord we blazed back in their direction, and the quiet was broken with the roar of the muskets and the shrill yells that answered them. The dim outline of a canoe appeared shadowy for a second where the fog hung more lightly, and a second flight of darts saluted us. One struck Pike fairly between his shoulders, and he fell forward, coughing up blood. Mordaunt's shoulder was grooved, and a flint-headed shaft glanced off Gilbert's morion.

We fired our second pistols and hastily reloaded. We were trapped, unable to move, shooting only at random. Now calls from the canoes that surrounded us sounded in hollow menace. They had winded us, and it was only a question of time before we would all be riddled. To step on the quicksand was death—preferable perhaps to being taken wounded to an Indian torture, but no such exit as any looked forward to without a shudder.

For a while our muskets had frightened them. A chancing bullet might have clipped one and given them a wholesomer respect for our prowess. Angus, it seemed to me, had hit the truth. It was the boat they coveted, and, knowing us cut off and stranded, they had ventured to attack.

The shouts grew fainter as they withdrew, and we held a hurried consultation. It would be hours before the tide turned. The mist showed no signs of dispersal. The problem seemed hopeless. We had laid Pike face-upward, but he was sped, the arrow protruding from his chest, dyed with his heart's blood. His fate seemed the certain forerunner of our own.

I cudgeled my brains until at last a vague memory of my boyhood came back. There had been a quicksand nigh the foot of a cliff hard by my Devon home, and once a maid, crossing the sands at low tide, had been caught therein. I had not seen the incident, but I remembered something about their having crept out to her on boards. Then the idle sail caught my eye, and the idea was born.

It was not very far to tide-edge from our stern, and we had been rowing in fairly deep water up to the time we had struck. Once in the water, half a dozen stout swimmers might make shift to drag the pinnace down the slope.

I outlined my plan. Angus, Gilbert, Reed and myself stripped off our corselets. Mordaunt and Congreve, the two best swimmers of the men, were to work with us, Jonson and Law to heave on the boat, and Peter, who had more brains than actual strength, save in some desperate, brief rally, was to stay aboard.

We worked swiftly. We made a harness to the boom of the sail, clearing the canvas from the yard. This latter we managed to lay out fairly flat on the quicksand astern. There was no wind to vex it, and it stayed unruffled. The widest bottom-boards we crossed in the shapes of Xs and set them on the sand either side of the stern as platforms for Law and Jonson to stand upon.

THE boat, thanks to her rounding bottom, was on a fairly even keel and had well resisted the sucking action of the sand. It was in my mind that, one by one, the six of us could wriggle down the canvas to the water and, swimming at our best stroke of legs with our hands resting on the boom, from which ran a bridle to the stern, make shift, with the two others heaving from their platforms, to start her down the slope, over the canvas, into the water.

It was all theory based on the idea that the bank was hump-ridged, and we would have to work in constant fear of the Indians discovering what we were about. Yet it was the only thing we could do. If the fog, with its cursed inconstancy, lifted, it would

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give us better aim at our foes, but it would take time to reload, and they could dash in from all sides. Or, if the fog held, they would inevitably shoot more arrows at us as soon as they recovered assurance from the silence of our guns that had no actual target to practise on.

The sail lay well, and with the boom I sliddered cautiously out upon it on my belly like a water-snake. The surface of the sand heaved and quaked under me at every motion, but the canvas prevented its getting a grip on me. The gentle slope of the bank aided, and I slipped into the water with the pole without trouble.

I gave a sharp, short whistle through my teeth, and Gilbert came squiggling down to me out of the mist that hid the boat from my sight, barely two fathoms distant as it was. So came Angus, Reed, Mordaunt, and Congreve. We swam out cautiously and silently with the boom to the full extent of the bridle and trod water. The tightening of the rope was the signal for Jonson and Law to make their effort, and the shaking of the line proclaimed them at it. It slackened for a moment, and we lunged forward with powerful clips of our legs. The weight of the pinnace brought us up short, but we persisted and thought we felt her budge, though it was hard to judge our progress.

Then of a sudden she tilted and, with the loss of her equilibrium, surged down on us with a soft rush. Next came Law and Jonson, and we all clambered aboard, not without some noise, shivering in the clammy pall of the fog and the chill of the water, which on that coast is always of less warmth than the air. We paddled back, hoping to secure the sail; but the rush of the ebb had lost us our bearings, and we were forced to go carefully, lest we might once more be stranded.

Peter, whose wits were ever on the alert, had muffled the thole-pins, though in truth it seemed as sensible to drift on the tide for a while as flounder in the fog. But Angus ordered out the oars to keep control of her. Poor Pike lay in the stern, covered with a boat cloak, and Neptune had retreated far into the bows. He still obeyed my order against noise, but we had barely got well seated when he was up and sniffing into the murk.

Again, by some freak of swirling wind above the fog, it became less solid, and we saw the cause of Neptune's anxiety. A long canoe, laden with men, seeming a ghostly bark of shadows, was ahead of us. They saw us as we spied them, ceased paddling and with a yell of savage exultation reached for their weapons. This was their undoing. Mordaunt had taken over Pike's sweep, sitting as stroke, and to him Angus shouted as we picked up our muskets.

"Pull! Pull till she skims!"

Pistol in one hand, he held the tiller with the other.

"Now fire!" he ordered.

We rose and shot above the rowers' heads into the thick of the shouting savages. It broke up their volley into a scattering, ill-aimed flight of arrows as we rushed down upon them.

The ash blades bent like bows under the mighty strokes led by Mordaunt. His great arms, swollen with veins, knotted by muscle, shot forth and back, and the rest trailed to the pendulum swing of his body as one man. The pinnace lifted with a rush of foam, surging on like the attack of an angry monster of the sea, a dragon spouting flame, as we emptied our pistols into that palsied Indian crew, bewildered, afraid at the havoc they had evoked, astounded at our getting free of the bank, terror-struck at the fire and the hail of lead.

They had their paddles out, but their unity was gone, and their leader fallen. The whole thing took but a few moments. Under the guide of Angus' steady hand, we swooped in an arc, rearing our bow at every stroke, our iron-strengthened stem ramming the slender canoe, crushing it down in splintering halves while we struck with our swords at the bobbing heads and swept on into the mist again.

What other canoes there were, we knew not. Belike they went to the assistance of the one we had rammed. We kept on and presently got out of the main set of the ebb and shot across comparatively still water, with Peter throwing the lead in the bows for fear of a second shoaling. We had learned our lesson. The friendliest Indian was a foe at heart.

"It is their fear that gives us our great advantage," said Angus. "Once let them think they have the upper hand and a chance to cut you off from the main body, and they will catch you, if they can, to torture you and perhaps learn the secret of your powers; if not, they'll slay you and make a feast of you so that the consumption

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of your flesh may strengthen their own. 'Tis a natural law. We are intruders. Every dog guards his own kennel. Fear is the only thing to hold their treachery in check."

We laid on our oars in the slack, deciding our course. It was not in any of our minds to go back until our purpose was accomplished. But the rip of the current was powerful, and we must wait for the turn of the tide rather than waste all our strength for little progress. The loss of our sail was a serious matter, but it could not be helped. It halved our capacity for exploring and meant steady work with the oars. But what needs be must.

Neptune lay silent, and with him for sentinel we could afford to relax. I bound up the red gouge in Mordaunt's shoulder, using an ointment I had fetched along, lest it should stiffen. We talked in low whispers, drank some wine and presently ate a little, waiting.

Hour after hour the fog lay all about us as we shifted at the caprice of the eddies and backwater swirls, relying on Neptune to give us ample warning. Save for our compass, we had no sense of direction. When no one spoke, the silence crowded on us till our ears seemed stuffed with cotton. From time to time Angus tossed a fragment of biscuit in the water, noting its direction, and at last he announced that the tide was at slack.

"Out oars!" he said.

At a good stroke we went northward, and, as we progressed, the fog slowly faded. The draught from the river or strait held it back, and later we discovered that the mist was all from the sea, born of warm airs and the colder current that swept the coast. Back of the first rampart of the hills it rarely reached far inland. Soon it cleared so we could see some little islands, mere rocks where birds nested, and beyond them low hills of green, spattered with flowers.

The flood tide came in from the sea, gripped us and sped us on our way. The path of it was easy to distinguish as the clearer ocean stream fought through the brown bay-water, and we kept to the midst of the current, the men merely dipping their oars. Ahead we could see the mouth of the strait converging, and soon we were between cliffs. The water fairly boiled till the tideway widened suddenly, with far-off banks lined with sedge, distant hills to our left and on the other hand one lone mount springing from the plain with jets of smoke rising from its split crest. These I took for signal-fires, but Angus thought them steam, and so they later proved.

Not far from here, according to the Indians I had spoken with, the strait forked, with the deeper channel to the left. Islands that seemed naught but rushes split the tide and formed a confusing delta, but we picked our way over to the northern passage. The sun was with us at last, warming and cheering us; the stream ran smooth and crystaline; vine-hung trees were on the banks; fish leaped; birds sang in the tall, slender rushes, and ducks and geese flew overhead in Vs. To eastward, tremulous against the sky, hung the baseless crests of snow.

We saw no Indians, no signs of habitation and, save for the steam jets we had passed, no smoke. Neptune lay snoozing, head on paws. Peter kept the soundings, which I jotted down with a rough sketch of the general course and contours. The bottom averaged six fathoms, ample depth for even the sea-castles of Spain.

Gradually the way narrowed to a steady width of some eighty fathoms. It seemed to be a river rather than a passage, and the dip of a cup into the water confirmed our fears. It was only slightly brackish. But we could not tell what lay beyond. If the Indians spoke sooth, it was deep water yet for many leagues. It might head from some lake and other rivers flowing eastward.

We decided to press on toward the distant mountains for a day or two or till we struck shallows or some obstacle such as falls or cataracts. So far the way was pastoral. Doves, ring-necked, rose in clouds from wild rice that grew back of the wide belt of reeds. Next to the stream this sedge was green; beyond it rustled dry to the Summer sun. Now and then we passed more islands of reeds alive with stilt-legged water-birds and paddling moor-hens, and once we saw a band of deer flying swiftly over the plain.

We were looking for some place to bury our dead. The presence of the corpse checked all idle talk as it lay grim and stiff beneath the cloak. It seemed hard to leave him in the wilderness, far from the Devon moors from whence he came. The sea is the sailor's rightful graveyard, but it would be impossible to keep the body until we returned to the *Golden Hynde*.

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A sluggish slough opened to the main current, its entrance masked by trees laden with wild grapes. Through their screen we saw a mound with a clump of timber crowning it, and, at the word from Angus, we turned into the backwater. The slope of the low hill ran out into a neck of land, and we ran the pinnace through the thick reeds to grate on gravel. The sedges held the boat and hid it.

There were no hostile signs, no sound but the chirp of birds and the hum of insects. Taking up Pike's stiffened body, we passed in slow cortége up the hill and, with a mattock that was in the boat, dug a grave. Our prayers were silent as we laid him there and stood for a while with bent heads, consigning him to the unknown. Silently we filled in the narrow pit and replaced the sods of rank grass as best we could. We left no outward sign, lest roaming Indians might suspect and disinter the body.

ONE rigid ruling Angus had laid down—never to go unarmed. We carried metal flasks of powder and shot for our guns and pistols, and to this we owed our lives. For Neptune, whom we had left in the boat, sensing that my command against noise ceased with our leaving him, came bounding up the mound, barking furiously. An arrow slithered by him, striking the turf ahead, and he leaped it and came on. Out of the longer grass, as if they had sprung from the ground itself, Indians with bows and long lances suddenly appeared, discharged their arrows and dropped to cover again like so many partridges before we could take aim at them. We were still among the trees and took protection, watching for the next sign of them. The mound was belted midway with a bare outcropping of rock, and, if they essayed to pass this, we would have them.

Even to our eager search not a spear of the grass waved unnaturally. A slight breeze ruffled it in long swathes, and so they must have snaked their way unseen to other positions. Once more they were up, bounding like grasshoppers, firing their arrows with a yell—and down out of sight once more.

"Hold your fire!" ordered Angus sharply. "Keep behind your trees. Wait till they reach the bare place."

Arrows were quivering in the bark of the trunks to attest the quality of their aim. They seemed to attack in a half-circle, but Angus told off Gilbert and Reed to watch for a surprize in the rear. Again the grass waved and rippled in the wind, and again the savages shrieked and leaped. This time, emboldened by our lack of defense, they loosed their arrows and rushed us, notching other arrows to their strings and crouching as they sprang into the clear space. There were about a score of them.

"Over their heads, Trevennion!" shouted Angus.

I caught his meaning. The thunder of our guns had ever awed the wild tribes we had countered. It was more than likely that these knew nothing of the attack on the sand-bank. The white man's thundering fire-sticks might bring us a bloodless victory. To kill would be to rouse the countryside and thwart our trip, making the return most perilous. To make them fear us might win us guides and allies or, at the worst, a neutral attitude.

It was as we hoped. They fell on their faces at the discharge. So they remained when I spoke to them in the few words I had picked up from Master Fletcher. Man talked with signs ere he achieved language, and many of such are common to all races. Much depends upon the countenance, the glance, the firmness of mouth and chin and in the tone of the voice. So do our dogs and horses know our temper. For the moment we were masters.

But we had to stamp in the fear. By some chance I was a better shot than Angus—than Gilbert or Reed for that matter—and I looked about for some target on which to prove to them that our mercy had been of intention. A long-legged heron rose from the slough and flapped off, heavily at first but soon sailing. We had long ago learned that many pellets are better than one bullet in dealing with savages, and I let go at him with the load in my musket, placing the charge well ahead for him to fly into.

The Indians winced again at the discharge, but their eyes had caught my purpose, and they gave a long "Ah!" of wonder when the bird stopped, turned a somersault and came down in a huddle of wings and legs. But I was not yet through. The sound of the gun had startled other things. A flock of ducks, headed by a green-capped drake, whirred from the water and came rushing overhead. I snatched Angus'

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weapon and fired into the thick of them. Luck was with me, and three birds, fat to bursting, came tumbling down in the midst of us.

Now we were gods for the time being, and the brown ignorants besought of us that we spare them. They showed us their arrows with rounded heads and explained they were a hunting-party, sending back a racer to their canoe at the head of the slough to bring down the craft and prove their words. When it came, there were women in it, and we felt assured. Also there were fish, birds and a young stag, all of which they forced on us with protestations of friendship. We led the way toward our boat to get them some beads and trinkets we had brought for such purposes, and the women took up the game and would have come with us had I not made them understand that we would make our camp and hold council on higher ground, where the trees would shade us.

There was small danger now. The presence of the women was our guaranty. The gifts distributed—knives for the men, beads put about the necks of the women—we returned to the shoulder of the mound, away from poor Pike's grave, and soon the fires were leaping and all of us fraternizing, the women serving us humbly with many sidelooks at our raiment.

We exhibited our swords and daggers, fired a pistol or so at a mark, sending the bullets through saplings. Most they wondered at our corselets, and Angus and Reed, for their benefit, put up a furious play of thrust and parry that impressed them marvelously. They essayed to show their own skill, which was less than we expected. Mordaunt picked up a bow and scrutinized it.

"'Tis but a flimsy thing," he said. "Give me a six-foot length of knotless yew and a clothyard shaft, primed with goose feathers; and I would show them some shooting. This thing is but a toy."

He hefted it and plucked at the string, finally selecting an arrow that he grumbled over for its lack of balance. Then he handed back the bow to its owner.

"Shoot," he said, making a gesture to interpret.

Taking the Indian by the elbow, he walked him back from the tree where they had set up a target of peeled bark. The Indian shook his head at the distance, but Mordaunt persisted, and the savage essayed the shot. The shaft flickered feebly to the foot of the tree. Then the sailor took the bow, set notch to sinew and, with his feet firmly stanched, bent the supple thing until the ends of the weapon bid fair to join, though it stood the strain. The arrow streaked, singing, and sank fairly through the barken mark, buried far beyond the barb in the tree.

"Master Trevennion," said Mordaunt, "your corselet is proof. Will you let me send a shaft at it?"

"If thou wilt step farther off," I laughed. "I have no mind to be knocked down."

"I will gage the flight," he said.

So I stood up, and Mordaunt, choosing three arrows, sped them so swiftly that the first had barely glanced from the steel when the third tapped me above the heart. As luck would have it, two of the flinty heads were shattered, and the Indians marveled at them.

Then came the feast. We had brought up wine from the boat, and we gave it to our savage allies sparingly. The sun sank before the food was gone, and by this time we were all good friends.

On the morrow, said the one who by his manner of authority seemed to lead, they would convoy us up the river and see us unmolested for a day's journey. I had made them understand with pictures scratched on the dirt that we were come from a great ship that presently would sail away with all of us beyond the seas.

This removed their last grudge against intrusion. They retreated to the bottom of the hill to make their night-camp, and we sat about the fire in gratulation of the day's work. We set our sentinels, and the rest drowsed off, save Angus and myself, who talked on until the moon came up.

Sleepy at last, I cast a glance at the rest before I rolled myself up in my cloak. One man was missing. It was Reed. He had been drinking heavily as was his wont when wine was opened, but I feared nothing till I pointed out his absence to Angus. His face grew grave in the conflicting light of fire and moon.

"The sot!" he muttered. "We must find him, Trevennion. I know his kind when the liquor is in them. I noted him with the young wench that served the chief. He gave her more beads. Come on before the mischief is done."

He spoke to the sentries, and I followed

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him down the hill toward the Indian camp. They had set no guard, it appeared, and we could see them stretched out about their fire like the spokes of a wheel. All seemed in order. Suddenly a shrill cry came from a clump of willows, and a girl, leaping like a fawn in flight, raced for the camp of her fellows. Lurching in pursuit was Reed. I caught the glint of a dagger in his hand.

ANGUS called to him to stop, but he paid no attention in his madness hatched of wine and lust. The girl sprang into the midst of the sleeping Indians, arousing them and pouring out a torrent of words as they surrounded her. We were all three in plain sight, the moon shining on our corselets. Coupled with her tale of Reed's assault after he had coaxed her from the camp, it looked as if we were about to raid them. In a trice they had seized their weapons, and Angus shouted for our comrades, who came running down the hill, steel in their hands.

But, instead of the arrows we expected, the savages vanished before our eyes, melting in the grass. Lest they should surround us, we retreated to the shelter of the hilltop once again.

"A fine trick, for thee to play," said Angus.

"I do as I choose," retorted Reed surlily. "Thou art not my master. Because thine ancient eyes are horn-blind and thy blood too sluggish, is no guide for my conduct. I am no monk."

"Thou art a fool," said Angus curtly. "My blood is not too slow in my veins to teach thee a lesson shouldst thou again imperil this expedition. If we come alive out of this fool scrape that thou hast got us into, by the sword of Drake, I will do it! Now use thy weapons to defend those thou hast endangered."

We stood in the trees waiting for the attack and, as it came not, wondering if their cowardice was our present salvation. It is not easy, as we found to our sorrow, for sailors to learn the tricks of land-fighting. A line of crackling scarlet ran along the neck of the peninsula and burst into roaring flame from which little tufts of fire were thrown upward. We broke into a run ere Angus called us back, seeing the folly of the attempt.

The reeds were burning like so much scattered hay, and in the midst of them our boat was nested. Even at the distance the heat of the flames beat on us, and their ruddy glow penetrated far into the clump of trees. Then came an explosion. Our keg of powder had gone up. In the vivid glare we saw the canoe of our late friends speeding fast down the slough toward the river. Our exhibition had instilled too much fear in them for a direct attack. They still held us in awe, but they had done all the damage possible and left us with only the gun charges we carried with us, with no craft—save we could take one from the Indians—with no implement better than swords and daggers to build one withal. The word spread against us as devils who would take the women of the tribes. We were in a sorry case, with naught ahead but to make the best way we could afoot to the coast, with God only knew how many savages dogging our trail and setting ambush for us.

Reed, with the rest of us standing aloof, attempted some excuse.

"If we win back, thou shalt plead to Drake," said Angus. "'Till then, no word more. If we do not want to fall together, we must e'en stand united. The hue and cry will be up. By dawn there may be a thousand all about us. If thy map is correct, Trevennion, we should be able to keep seaward along the north bank of this river and so, skirting Tamal, come upon the coast. God fend we are not too long delayed; we may have to cut our way back to Drake through a host of them."

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE SUNSET

WE HAD been gone but two days. It took us twelve more of wandering through marsh and fen, lost in reeds that grew above our heads, struggling through pools where the foul gas bubbled as the mud sucked at our sodden shoon, fighting foot by foot through such a jungle of tough-stemmed undergrowth as left us less than a mile of progress after hours of sweating toil, blunting our swords and daggers by hacking at the stubborn hedge, hungry, thirsting, our clothes torn, scorched by the sun on the uplands and drenched by the fog when we plodded out of the sedgy maze to the river once again.

For the first week we went unmolested through the swamps. Perchance the

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Indians thought we would surely lose ourselves in that boggy wilderness, where the snakes writhed and corpse-lights danced in the twilight, will o' the wisps that we would not follow. Wood for fire there was none. A score of times we were forced to swim across a slough. Some fish we snared, and twice I shot ducks with rank and fishy flesh that we devoured raw. And always was the fear that Drake would have sailed. He had given us ten days. Angus was convinced that he would wait longer or send an expedition after us, which, failing of success, would delay the voyage. But upon that was the alarm that the tribes might have gathered and attacked him so fiercely that he might be forced to haul out to sea and we be cut off before we could signal him.

Fighting through the marsh, our spirits were soon as sodden as our boots. Often we lay down on the soggy ground to wake with the bewildering mist walling us in, weaving a funereal pall in forecast of our fate. Ever we strove toward the upper lands to escape the fog, only to come upon some wide arm of the river where the reeds grew in water so deep that we could not wade; neither could we swim through the thick rushes and must fain retrace our steps and try another way.

At length, trailing ever westward, we reached firm ground that sloped up to the coast hills where thick forests frowned at us. One day we halted, Gilbert having killed a deer and put fresh heart into all of us with the broiled collops. We dried our clothes and patched them, essaying with some success to sharpen our sword-edges on the rocks. Night found us drunk with sleep and Neptune the only real sentry, though he, too, was in sad case, thick-burred and footsore, gaunt and weary as the rest.

Next day we saw signs of two parties of Indians and hid from them. We hugged our scanty powder and shot as a miser hugs his gold. That evening a brown savage stalked into our circle before even Neptune scented him, for he had come upwind. He carried a green branch and made friendly greeting. He was akin to the coast tribe that we had found in the little bay where we careened, he said, and he bore news that we had been reported slain because we had tried to carry off some women.

From his sign-talk I surmized that we were supposed to have been consumed in our boat. The tribe had boasted that they had set fire to the reeds while we were in them and that we had gone up with the powder.

But the ship had not sailed. Drake was yet waiting for us in the hope we would win back. I asked the man to guide us, to be our interpreter and assurance with the savages between us and the coast; but he refused. He showed me a half-healed wound and explained that he had been cut off from a hunting-party by the Tamals, barely escaping with his life. Now he was on his way to a friendly inland tribe.

We were desperate and forced to stern measures. So, after promises of gifts had no avail—for the Tamals, he said, were giants and very numerous—we bound him. Mordaunt himself tied the knots with a sailor's skill, but in the night we heard a cry and, running to the spot, found Congreve stabbed in the side with his own knife. He had heard the tiniest rustle in the grass and turned to see the Indian springing at him like a leopard.

It was a grievous wound. He could not walk; neither could we leave him; so we made shift to form a rude litter and carried him with us. The second day he grew delirious and shouted snatches of chants until we, for his safety and our own, gagged him.

We were close to the territory of the Tamals, and we went warily but with all the speed we could muster. The purple mount of Tamal was our landmark. From its summit we knew we could look far out to sea and, if need be, light a great fire and build ourselves a defensive camp about it until Drake came. From the hills, brown with Summer, yellow with poppies of burnished, tawny gold, shaped like the scarlet ones that flame in the wheat in England, we saw glimpses of the great bay, stretching far southward, with banks of fog creeping in at twilight and out to sea again at mid-morning.

Now we could see they seldom covered all that bright expanse but moved in set direction of the winds that blew down the funnels of the hills. Where we trod were oaks with mistletoe in their boughs, long beards of gray moss trailing, a jungle of growths waist-high, sweet-scented but harsh against advance. As we mounted, we sighted rolling, barren sand-hills to the south across the entrance to the bay. But never did we sight water-craft, save some canoe far out from land.

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The heights of Tamal were clothed with woods so somber that we walked in a green twilight among the massive boles, trees with strange porous bark of a ruddy color and with the first branches high above us, the topmost shutting out the sky. There were a few birds, bright blue, crested, with screaming voices that proclaimed our coming so that we slunk from trunk to trunk, peering down the shadowy aisles to sight the giant Tamals.

If they were aught like their trees, we adjudged them Titans. I paced off beside one prostrate king, shorn of its crest. It took seventy strides to measure from butt to tip, and it was full six fathoms in girth. These were evergreens of one unfailing hue of verdure, and beneath them reigned all the solemnity of a pagan grove where strange rites were held and fierce monsters might well make their abode. But under them was little brush, save high brake and a thick carpet of russet needles where the foot fell silent.

We climbed, bearing our wounded comrade by turns, ever alert, with Neptune trailing ahead and all about. We were in the thick of these woody monarchs when he came back silently and muzzled me. We halted, clutching our weapons, conjuring up strange beings that might stride out upon us, ogres matching their dwelling-place. So thick-grown were the trees that we feared little from random arrows and could hope with small advantage to shoot back.

Overhead the wind—the sea-wind, for we had smelled the tang of it mingling with the spice of the fir-like forests—moaned through the upper boughs. There was no other sound, but I fancied I heard the great heart of the forest beating—not heard so much as felt. And there was danger abroad. Every sense betrayed it, warned. Neptune walked close beside me, his lips curled back in a silent snarl.

Then came the alarm, the sound as of some great horn wound far off, echoing amid the trees until the ear lost all direction. Again it came like Triton sounding his seabugle of hollow shell.

Shadows, wraiths rather than men, were slipping through the forest. We saw them dodging behind trees at the end of aisles abruptly ended by a somber shaft back of which a dozen men might hide. We saw no glint of weapons, and I conjured up thoughts of mammoth apes, furry like the bark of the great trees, moving on to tear us apart. Our faces were gray as we glanced at one another in that forest solitude where the wind moaned far overhead and these ghosts crept on us.

Angus rallied us.

"Are we Englishmen to fear aught else that walks upright?" he said. "We must risk a shot at them. Trevennion, stand ready. An thou sight one, blaze at him. Courage, men, these are not fantoms! I'll warrant you the blood will flow if Trevennion beads one."

We stood grouped openly while I waited with my musket fresh primed. A form showed flittingly, and I ventured. The noise of the shot rolled like a thunder-peal; the figure leaped high with a fiendish yell, and all about us broke out such an outcry as almost froze our blood. In a common panic we rushed on with guns ready, resolved to sell our lives dearly. Congreve was jostled in his litter in the mad flight so that his wound broke out afresh and the blood dripped down upon his panting bearers. But this we knew not until afterward. The dead body of the Tamal lay across our path, his belly torn asunder by the shot, his intestines sprouting. I caught a glimpse of a copper skin, a fiendish face set in death, with shining teeth between thick lips, as I sprang over him.

The trees ended, and we broke abruptly into a little glen. A sudden familiar scent of lilacs smote us, and there was a copse of the flowers abloom, showering their fragrant petals on us as we rushed through them. From somewhere came a shower of stones, slung from the forest back of us, hurtling through the air. One struck Angus so hard upon the morion that the helm showed a great dent and he staggered. I caught at him and saw his face was lined with anguish. A thin stream of blood came from ears and nostrils.

"A bit dizzy, lad," he said wanly. "Let us stand and give them a volley. They are afraid of the guns!"

We fired, blindly enough, at the trees we had left, and once more came yells, deep-chested, furious but holding a note of fear.

I set my arm about Angus, for he was hard put to it to go forward. His eyes were filled with blood, and I feared a mortal injury.

"A Drake. A Drake!" he cried. "On! On! Down, dogs, down!"

He was delirious from the blow, and I

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called to Gilbert. Together we helped him up the steep pitch, for we had left behind the timber and were upon the stony crown of the mount. The sea-breeze came strong to our wide nostrils. Neptune raced on ahead and stood with wagging tail, looking back to speed us.

There was never sight so glad as that heaving expanse. The fog was creeping along the coast, but we looked over its shifting clouds, tinged with sunset, to where the free waves ran glittering. But the eager joy faded. Just beyond the line of fog bank, their yards braced fore and aft, their lofty canvas pyramided, sailed two great galleons of Spain. And seaward, dancing lightly on, sped the *Golden Hynde*. A cannon spat a tiny spurt of flame from the stern of our vessel in mocking defiance. We saw the smoke curl and heard the faint report borne to us by the wind. Out from the galleon's bows came an answer, but the *Golden Hynde* outsailed them fast, though they went lumbering in vain pursuit.

But we were abandoned, marooned. Drake's return was cut off even though he did not esteem us dead. The chase was up. The ships of Spain were after their treasure and the daring Englishman who had robbed them of it. These two halting ships were but the vanguard of a battle fleet. And we were left behind, between the Tamals and the sea.

We watched the chase as the fog rolled upward like smoke, radiant in the sunset. We saw the sails shine and the hills glitter and, at last, the topsails of the *Golden Hynde* gleam as if leaved with gold before the sun sank and the darkness swept down upon us on that savage mountain-top.

CHAPTER XIV

ALONE

I HAVE sometimes wondered what were the thoughts of my companions that night upon the mountain-top, cut-off, surrounded by the mist that hung like a great cloak from the shoulders of the mount, leaving us clear to the sky. From this woolly fleece thrust forth the plumey tops of the mammoth trees where the howling gibbons of the wood were lurking. Above, the heavens were bright-studded with stars of white flame. We were set apart, alone, with Drake and Moone and all the gallant band aboard the *Golden Hynde* speeding far westward, mocking the Spanish galleons that clumsily wallowed after, if, indeed, they had not given up the chase at dark. Curiously enough, we never spoke afterward of this night to compare our ponderings, but, belike, they did not vary much.

For my part I realized how utterly we had depended upon Drake, much as children do a father, to think and plan for us and lead us. The removal of his bright, flaming spirit left me numb for the time until my own manhood rallied. For I was far different from the one—less man, perhaps, than merely full-grown lad—who had sailed from Plymouth a year and a half since. Into those eighteen months had been crowded many years for the toughening of my mind as well as my muscles. Looking back at all the things that had happened to me since Drake visited my uncle, the wizard, it seemed inpossible that only a year and a half had passed, and of a certainty there be times when we mature swiftly and, if we hold luck, others when we drift in backwaters and so even the score to a fair average and let our youth, left behind in the swift pace of events, catch up with us again.

Drake had not deserted us. He had been forced to save the many at the expense of the few by the advance-guard of the Spanish ships. And those same ships would hold us in their bilges for later torture and inquisition should their masters lay hands on us. For every ounce of gold that Drake bore in the little *Golden Hynde* they would exact from our wrenched bodies some bloody recompense.

Yet we were marooned on this wild coast above the dense forest where the stone-throwing giants lived, God knew how many thousand leagues from Merrie England, and our only way of return was by a ship. I felt sure that Drake would have left some message for us with the friendly Indians in the bay where we had careened, perhaps some stores. We had a compass.

I began vaguely to plan securing a canoe or two from this friendly tribe, bribing some of them to act as interpreters and guides and so make our way south. Not by the sea—for these canoes were good but for Summer weather and friendly seas—but by the southern arm of the great river where we had adventured. In my mind's eye I recalled the map of Magellan that showed

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where the line of Tropicus Cancri crossed the narrowing of India Nova, a deep indented body of water called the Mexican Gulf. To eastward of this lay the islands of the Spanish Main. Once there we might make shift to build some sort of craft to cross the Oceanus Atlanticus to home.

This would take months, perhaps years. What lay between of deserts, jungles, mountains and forests, of savages and wild beasts, of hunger and thirst and wounds, was not to be contemplated. We could all but die once, and, as Englishmen, at least we could die trying not to and striving with our faces set for home.

Home! The word tinctured the loneliness with bitter-sweet, and just then Angus, whose cracked head burned with fever and who hitherto had kept silence that had drifted into sleep, began to sing in a high voice, yet softly:

"There's a glen I ken, where the heather blooms,
  And the wild stag comes to drink,
On the mountainside, where the cauld mist glooms
  And hides the fell's steep brink.
There's an auld gray keep beside a burn,
  Where the lairds of Angus dwell;
On the wings o' dreams I swift return
  To the land I love so well.

"Far, far I roam, yet ne'er leave home.
  For it's ever i' my heart;
Yet my heart is sair for that land so fair
  And the day I homeward start."

It was the voice of a lad, a homesick lad, that sang. In his sickness and his dreams Angus had tracked back to the time when, plaid on shoulder, he had first marched proudly from that gray and ancient keep to retrieve the fortunes of the clan. Later he told me about that and set down the song for me. That night the sad sweetness of his voice, the sentiment set in the lips of this grim master-at-arms, this penniless laird to whom my heart had warmed from the first, sank me deep in melancholy.

I too was "on my lane, dreein' my own weird," as Angus would have put it. Back in Devon were a few acres where the heather grew amid the gorse and the moorland ran up from the sea to the gray tors. There, too, was a ruined tower with myself as sole and penniless heritor, now marooned somewhere between Anan and Quivira on the savage coast of California. A man's homeland grows dearer to him as the chances of reaching it grow less. There is in all of us a dominant desire to know our bones laid at the last under the earth on which we romped as careless younglings, though our spirits may hold some urge that, while the blood runs swift, drives us forth to the strange places of the world.

So must the earth be compassed and mapped down; so must the friendly dominion of the civilized peoples conquer the world. There be those who are born stay-at-homes and those who, like Drake and his followers, must needs worship at the feet of Dame Adventure and ever seek to find the unknown beyond the far horizons. Which is the happier, God knows.

Angus ceased to sing; the rest seemed asleep or drugged with their own thoughts, and I lay in a crevice of the rocks to which I had made shift to fit my tired body, looking up at the stars that seemed as beacons set upon illimitable stairways leading up and up—to what?

Many times I had lain star-gazing while my soul shriveled and I felt of less consequence than a mote in a sunbeam, but this night, as the Great Bear wheeled about the Polar Star, swinging slowly in answer to the Law, while the Milky Way shimmered in jeweled radiance, all this vast vista of the infinite seemed to comfort, to tell me that there was that within me that was more imperishable than these shining points that were merely witnesses of Power.

A sentence of Angus, spoken on deck one moonlit night, came back to me. "Death is but the gate to Life, Trevennion."

Now I knew the truth of it—knew it as well and as simply as I breathed. The stars appeared as friendly eyes looking on a voyager that ultimately should know their secrets. I was lifted up until I seemed to come to an abyss that did not affright me, for I felt that presently I should know how to pass it. My soul waxed strong within me, and in that strength, soothed as a lost child that finds itself held in mighty, tender arms, I fell asleep.

The sun was level with the surface of the fog, turning it to a wondrous opal radiance, when I woke and found the rest sitting up ayawn, save Angus, who lay with a waxen face that troubled us. While we held council, he opened eyes that lacked all luster and looked upon us as if we were utter strangers. He was like a child in thought and action, obedient and trustful. We had lost a resourceful, experienced leader, unless we could bring him to his mind again,

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and this was beyond the little skill of myself and Peter. The bone of his skull had been cracked; one part of it gave to pressure, and doubtless this rested upon his brain. Yet we could do naught but cleanse the wound.

"We must have one to assume authority and act as leader," said Gilbert. "I propose you, Trevennion. You see, Reed," he went on with his easy manner that still masked a vigorous respect of his own opinion and the will to further it, "Trevennion is the only one of us who knows aught of navigation, and that, I wot, is most essential. You and I would soon be lost in the wilderness."

"And can this young springall lead us out of it?" asked Simon.

"He is best qualified to do so," said Gilbert.

I demurred. I was the youngest of the four of us who should bear authority. Angus was out of it. I had no mind to trust ourselves to Reed, for the man was not worthy. Gilbert was my choice, and I said so, at which Reed glowered and turned sullen.

"Have you a plan, Trevennion?" asked Gilbert. "I confess I have cudgeled my wits all night and found no way out of this pass with the Spaniards by sea and those howling brutes back of us."

I told them what I thought of Drake's having left some word and of my idea of passing southward on the river so far as we could go, and with one word they all approved of it.

"While this fog holds," I said, "and that should be till noon, as we have observed it, we can strike north along the coast and likely pass the Tamals to gain the bay and the friendly tribe. But we must start at once."

WE HAD not gone an hour's journey when we found that we were bearing a corpse in the litter. Our wounded comrade had succumbed. We were traveling through a wood sweet with bracken, and we dug a pit in the soft soil amid the ferns and left the second of our little party to lie in the wilderness, going on in sad silence, eight men and a dog against a world of savages and unguessed perils.

Yet it was some comfort, after all, to think of Drake winging home. He would win through, I held no doubt of that; the doughty adventurer would yet sail the *Golden Hynde* into Plymouth Sound, perchance up the Thames itself to where Elizabeth should greet him and surely knight him, while all England should ring with the news that her sons had ventured round the world and brought back such treasure and such record of valiant deeds performed that the scroll of history woul ever be proud to show on an illumined page. We had had our share in it; we, at least, had done what we could, and, as yet, we held what lives were left to us in our own hands.

Most of the day we traveled by compass through thick woodlands. We passed through the belt of the great trees safely and sometimes marched under the interlacing boughs of great oaks that bore acorns and also patches of mistletoe. Their leaves were different from the oaks of England, yet there were times when we could have thought ourselves at home again in some park, when we saw through the vistas troops of deer standing to gaze and then go leaping off. Neptune only looked at them and then up at me with wistful eyes and eager tongue but kept his pace and his responsibility as our vanguard.

We saw no Indians, and at noon the fog had gone, dissolved in the salty breeze that reached us in the recesses of the woods and told us that the sea was close at hand, a knowledge that ever heartens the sailor, though there be foes upon the deep. Sometimes we broke into the open and, in midafternoon, espied a great space of windy blue, heaving in long rollers. Far to sea showed the upper sails of a vessel, too heavily canvassed to be the *Golden Hynde*. It was tacking shoreward, a galleon that had quit the chase.

To avoid the heavy brush we ventured on the ridges and made good progress.

In a sparkling stream we espied fish and made shift to dam the current and chase them into a pool, where we scooped them out with our hands. And, lo, they were trout, firm-fleshed and speckled for all the world like those that oar in English brooks! In a cave we made a fire and cooked them; then we journeyed on. There were many strange trees, some with round, flat leaves and bark the color of a dragon's blood and others that had peeling barks of rich colors, standing like harlequins of the wild.

At last we came out upon grassy cliffs, sprinkled with gay flowers, and walked upon the edge above the pounding surf and flying gulls for all the world as if this were the Old Albion instead of the New, for

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we were nearing the head of the little bay. The distant sail had tacked to the south, and, beyond it, another gleamed and yet another. The hue and cry was out, but the prey had escaped.

There were no canoes upon the beach, nor sign of Indians, at which we went down cautiously. The cross that Chaplain Fletcher had set up was still in place; so was the copper ring about the tree, but the tribe was nowhere visible. Darkness was upon us, and we found shelter in a cave bedded with sweet-savored and dried kelp—sweet to us seafarers, at least—and so we slept till morning, Neptune on watch at the entrance.

His sharp bark woke us, and we reached for our arms and hastened to the cave's mouth. There stood four Indians whom I hailed and who ran forward and fell upon our necks with every token of delight. One of them, the chief, by name Wingo, produced from his scanty waist-cloth a parchment that he had wrapped in bark. Within this skin was a smaller one, written in the hand of Drake himself. I had forecast this, yet the sight of it made us grip each the other's hand, while the savages beamed on us at the joy this white man's magic had wrought. I read it aloud, for Wingo gave it me, and Angus was still distraught.

At New Albion,
July 26, 1579

DEAR LADDES—

I am forced to leave ye, for galleons of Spain are in sighte from the Cape. I feare greatlye I maye not returne, but, since ye may stille be quicke—which so God grante, though ye are reported dead—I leave for ye certaine stores and pouder with bullettes. These ye shall finde buryed at the ende of a cave hard bye the Cross the chaplaine did sette up.

Alsoe against this hazzard I have sette Scope, my paige, to scriven a copye of Mercator's mappe uponne faire parchmente. Since the Spaniardes have the Sea, try ye by land for the Mexico Gulfe that gives uponne the Spanish Main. To that shore I shall in God's wille and mercie returne with all speede after I make reporte of this Voyage to Her Sovereigne Majesty.

I am pressed, dear laddes, and indeede I am no clerk. God grante ye come backe safe or I find ye on the Maine. God blesse and keep ye.

FRANCIS DRAKE.

This by the hand of Wingo, Chiefe, to Master Angus or Trevennion or Gilbert, or he who maye after them be in commande of my shore party. He has beene welle rewarded for this acte.

It was almost as if he had spoken to us. The eyes of the Indian bulged as the men searched in the back of the very cave in which we had slept and discovered some small arms, parchment, quills and a bottle of ink, some flagons of Spanish wine from Chile, a bag of golden doubloons put in at a hazard against some later need and, best of all, a keg of powder and a leather sack of bullets with a molding-iron and some bars of lead.

The other parchment was the map that Scrivener Scope had worked hard upon, pricking out the course of the *Golden Hynde* and Drake's suggested trail across land to the Mexico Gulf. To hearten us Scope had marked big the small space that enclosed England, Scotland and Ireland, with Plymouth printed off the Devon shore. It seemed a talisman at that time, a promise of a happy issue. We passed it from hand to hand, the savages staring puzzled at this picture-writing. I did not attempt to tell them its portent; it covered more space than their brains could hold, and it was not in my mind to discourage them at the start of any journey we might persuade them to make with us by suggesting too wide a travel. But, with our compass and the stars, though lacking an astrolabe, we should make shift in some sort with God's help to get back home again.

"Marry," said Gilbert, "said I not Trevennion should be leader, since Angus is without present wits? Has not Drake set

*This map follows accurately the lines of Mercator's first project, drawn in 1589 and, in all likelihood, carried by Drake. It is such a copy of that chart as John Scope, cabin-page, with some craft of penmanship, would have made in such an issue. As far as it goes, it is authentic and of the period, though some might unadvisedly challenge the excellent cartography displayed at so early an era.

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down his name as second in command, and did not Trevennion guess, not only that Drake would leave us word and stores, but did point out the very course that the admiral suggests, bettering it, indeed, by using this river? Moreover, he can speak with the Indians. So, it is settled."

Reed gave his consent with a grudging nod, the rest by heartier acclaim, and I found myself willy-nilly appointed leader, responsible for the way and our ultimate safety. Wingo had been gazing sympathetically at Angus and with words and signs asked the nature of his sickness. I showed him, the laird standing docile as a child with a scratched arm the while, and Wingo's face lit up. The wise man of the tribe, he said, held a vast knowledge of healing herbs, bonesets and purges and drafts for reducing fevers, and he would surely aid our comrade.

The Indians, it seemed, had brought the news to Drake of the advance of the Spanish ships and, when the *Golden Hynde* reluctantly took up her anchors and sailed out of the bay, had watched with awe the flashes of the guns and hidden from the thunders of the firing until Drake had won to sea, leaving one galleon with a broken mast.

Then, fearing these enemies of their friend would land and make war against them for cause of their friendliness to Drake, which might be easily discovered, the tribe had fled inland, Wingo coming back to find out if the coast was clear and the canoes still safe where they had hidden them in the brush upon the cliffs.

He plucked the white bark from a young birch and made a horn of it, halloaing into the hills. Within an hour the first of our brown-skinned allies appeared, rejoicing at our appearance, anxious to do aught they could. They were a kindly, simple folk that thought us more than men. They made a great feast of berries, birds and rabbits, deermeat, young bear cubs and salmons, and we shared with them the Spanish wine in wise measure to their great satisfaction.

But the best thing they did was to provide the herbs for the wound of Angus, a great bundle of aromatic leaves and twigs that the wise man of the tribe brewed with many incantations and made into a poultice that smelled so savory one could believe readily in its healing value. Within a short space it had reduced the heat that burned in the laird's skull and, I fancied, brought back some extra light to his eyes and color to his wan cheek. I bade Peter carefully watch the leaves and keep a supply of them.

The feast done, I coaxed Wingo and some of the elders on to a level place of the beach and, squatting with them, drew upon the sand with a twig a rough map of the little bay, the great one below it guarded by Mount Tamal, the river up which we had adventured, and its arm that stretched to the south. Next I placed between us, slowly, three knives, a brace of pistols, powder and shot, a dozen of the doubloons and, lastly, four flagons of wine, noting closely the growing sparkle in their eyes as they silently watched my actions. Then I explained to Wingo our need for canoes and a guide, hinting at more presents.

For a while they surveyed first the chart and then the gifts, then searched each other with their eyes. None spoke, but their mute understanding of each other's will sufficed. At last Wingo took up the twig and scratched a mark, well down the southern river. So far he and one other would go with us, he said. We would take three canoes and they would return in one of them. Below this spot, he told by word, gesture and drawing, were marshes and shallow waters choked with reeds. Here, too, were many ducks and geese—he marked two Vs of flying birds upon the sand, one larger winged than the other.

And he warned us that beyond were great mountains where savages lived who ate the bodies of men and sacrificed them to their gods. He was doubtful if they would touch us, seeing we were gods, but very sure that he and his companion would not be spared. This would be a seven suns' journey, he informed me, making seven rayed disks in a line. And he would expect more gifts in generous measure.

There was little we could spare him, but necessity drove us to some sacrifice, and I made the bargain, well satisfied. We were to start upon the morrow—to start for home!

CHAPTER XV

THE YELLOW PEBBLES

I COULD write many volumes covering our adventures—albeit I kept no journal—but, looking back, the time until we found the yellow stones that nigh made an ending

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to our journey passed so smoothly by comparison that I pass it over swiftly. We paddled by night and hid by day, save when the tide was with us in the lower reaches. Then we hid under skins and rushes, and Wingo and his tribesmen paddled the first canoe and trailed the rest. Twice were we hailed and never molested. The great rushes for the most part kept us from observation by the camps of the Fish-Eaters, as Wingo termed them, they being set upon peninsulas that we approached carefully.

Through a maze of channels we struck the south fork and went southward. The river wound through a vast plain set with waving grasses. To the west were blue hills that guarded the sea; to the east snow-covered peaks showed afar, their mighty bases blending in the blue haze so that the crests seemed as white clouds, distinguished only by their never shifting.

It was hot, and flies tormented us, among them one that stung villainously, inserting its beak and filling its transparent body with our blood, leaving after a swelling and a vile itch. Game was abundant. We saw ducks and geese, cranes and herons, great carrion birds that soared above on still wings, small water-hens and many waders, birds like grouse of Scotland and many quails, antelopes and deer, rabbits and wild gray dogs at which Neptune lifted his mane and growled from the passing canoe or whimpered when they filled the night with distant howling.

There were fishes of all kinds, very sweet and toothsome, and we lived well. Strangely, after we started south, we saw no Indians, only sometimes the smoke of faraway fires. Wingo explained that the plain was a neutral ground, a hunting preserve, the tribes abiding either in the coast hills or the high mountains and using the level for hunting expeditions only, save as they might come together by accident—when the coastal men, being less of stature and bravery, would ever seek to retreat without battle. So we came to go more boldly by daylight.

Other streams joined our wide current, most of them, like the main river, smooth and heavy and brown with the soft dirt they carried down, but at last we came to where a sparkling torrent thrust a silver wedge of troubled water far into the murkier tide, coming strong and lusty from the mountains. We reached it late one afternoon and camped there, fishing for the trout Wingo proclaimed truthfully lived in its swifter, purer waters.

I remember well the setting sun sending level beams toward us from the blue hills that barred the sea when Wingo produced one of the guineas we had given him and told us by signs that all could read that the golden metal could be found in great quantity farther up this stream. I paid little attention to this until I noted the sudden silence in which there seemed to hang in suspense the common thought of several, beating upon my own brain. Then I looked up and saw, in the faces of all save that of Angus—who was playing idly with the coin—and save those of Wingo and his comrade, an eager desire.

It seemed to me that the golden sun-rays, gilding their bronzed faces, touching to metallic fire the golden hair and beard of Gilbert, glowing ruddy in the eyes of Peter and the sailors, emphasized a radiance that came from the feeling sudden placed in their own souls, a leaping, greedy lust for gold.

If there is a metal that holds magic, it is gold; the name of it, the sight of it, the thought of it, conjure up instant visions of what its possession means to each in different measure. Some there be who love the metal for itself, delighting in its chink and feel. To others it prophesies wine and women, songs and silks, high estate and lands, according to their degree. But to all it spells power, promises what they lack, strikes off the fetters of all seeming servitude, turns Gold, the Master of the World, into Gold, My Servant.

And in this false touchstone lies the spring of all evil desires. Always is there the passion, to see it breed, to possess more. "Kill," it whispers. "Steal, bear false witness, betray, lie, covet, do aught so ye get more of me." It turns the heart to base metal for all the good that may be wrought with it. There is a devil latent in it that shines from the eyes; it was surely sown in the earth by the master devil for his own ends.

These thoughts are not those of my youth. In good sooth, I needed gold as much as any, but the responsibility of the voyage lay heavy on me. Within a day, so Wingo told me, we were come to the marshes when he must return and we set out toward the unknown. Gold to me at that moment

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seemed mere weight to carry when we must travel light and fast. The bag of guineas, I well saw, might serve as trinkets for barter or, once on the Mexico Gulf, as bribe or purchase for commodities, but to gather gold now, it seemed, was to gather fetters. If it had been lead, now, for bullets, or iron that we might forge into weapons. . . .

But these, my comrades, with their gilded masks of faces in the sunset and the lust of gold shining in their eyes so that they looked like those of wild animals who crouch about a fire, meant to gather gold. Their every thought was merged in a tawny flood of greedy longing.

Simon Reed licked his lips as if he already tasted the wine that he should buy, the kisses he should bargain for. Gilbert's eyes were beyond my reading. I could fancy that his dreams ran to reestablished position, mayhap to the wooing and winning of some fair girl denied him in his poverty. The sailors began to whisper among themselves, then to talk openly with guffaws and coarse badinage. Angus still played with the coin. The simples had done him much good in allaying the fever, but time alone, it appeared, would mend his mind.

It would seem that I frowned at them, for Reed met my gaze with a challenge.

"'Tis what we all came for, I fancy," he said truculently. "And here it lies, like berries for the picking. Let us all go berrying, Master Trevennion, though it would seem by thy countenance that thou art above such things as riches."

I held my temper. It was a trick I was teaching myself. I had learned from Drake and from Moone that Temper was a good weapon but one best kept well sheathed against occasion if one would lead. I turned to Wingo and asked if he would go with us. He broke into urgent negation.

"This stream," he said, "flowed from a valley walled with cliffs so high the trees of Tamal would appear beside them as spears of grass. In it dwelt a race of warriors who were both invincible and cruel who would take us for sacrifice, and eat our flesh raw and grind our bones into their acorn meal so that the strength of our marrow might enter into them. They used this soft, yellow stuff for ornaments and esteemed it theirs. To gather it were death."

So I translated it, and Reed's face grew sneering and those of the sailors stubborn; even Peter's hardened. Gilbert seemed still wrapped in a vision.

"WERE ever roses plucked without thorn-pricks?" asked Reed. "Or gold gathered without spilling of blood? Wingo says that these men are like to think us gods. Let us plan to so show them our strength that they may do so."

"You forget the Tamals," I said.

"A pest on what I forget. I remember only why we came on this voyage."

"You came on it for divers reasons of your own, Simon Reed," I said, "and you received much of your gold before you started."

"What mean you?"

"That I saw Doughty hand you over a roll of coin in the tavern attic in Plymouth to make the voyage end speedily," I answered with a heat that was not all without judgment, for I saw in Reed the true obstacle to our progress and had in mind the instant dispossession of his attempt at mastership by showing him in his true colors to the rest.

Gilbert, I fancied, I might manage. To stop to pick up gold, setting aside the danger from the tribe that lived in the great valley, was a waste of time and a clog. If I could, I would check the desire before it flamed too high. Reed leaped to his feet, his sword half out.

"Ye call me kin with Doughty," he cried. Then, in the same breath as his choler mastered reason, "Then 'twas thou who spied in through the window; 'twas thou whom I would have spitted that night?"

"You forget I fleshed ye in the arm," I said. "Belike I could do the same again."

I was not averse to trying. The man ever affected me with a loathing based on the knowledge that he had been traitor once and that the taint was in his blood. Sooner or later there must come an outburst, and I was minded to take his challenge up and so disable him that he would trail more humbly till his wounds healed. And I meant to make the most of all advantage. The light was at my back, dying as it was. I knew his tricks of fence, and I had one or two of my own, taught by Angus, culled by practise with the other gentles, that I fancied I could surprize him with. He was ready enough. Our blades were out and grating when Gilbert struck them up with his own.

"There is no light for fighting," he said.

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"And we can ill spare the full strength of any one of us. What Reed may have done has been passed over by Drake. It is not for us to revive it."

"Drake has naught to do with us," said Reed. "We are our own men now, each as good as the other. If we win home or if we die, it is as well to do it with gold upon us. To pass it up is fool's talk. I will call truce with Trevennion until later, for, as thou sayest, Gilbert, we need all our hands. What say the rest of ye?"

I marveled at his relinquishment of the duel, for he was no coward, but I saw instantly that he had checked my move by affecting to fall in with Gilbert and so gain him over. And he had won, for the others, Peter included, answered him with a stubborn "Aye" that showed me it was useless to talk more. On my side I had only Neptune. Angus was with none; he was not even his own man. But I essayed a last argument.

"Why set ourselves back at the beginning of our journey?" I asked them. "It means slow progress, heavy burdens."

"Gold is no heavy burden to him who owns it," said Reed.

And Gilbert backed him.

"Thou knowest the fable of the man who passed through the wheat field looking for the best ears, Trevennion," he said. "In the end he got nothing, for the owner of the field fell on him for trespass, whereas, at the first, he might have got clear with plenty. Our journey is so long that Time means little. We go south; we fear not Winter. The gods have provided; they are not apt to set feasts after one is refused. I have needed this gold so badly, Trevennion, that, for the lack of it, I have seen all that was dear to me pass beyond reach so that all was left was a dream of some sort of reprisal and tardy recompense. Those, while I have the chance, I shall not let slide for a savage's tale of giants and flesh-eaters. Damme, Trevennion, dost thou lack guts to make a bid for fortune, or is thy own so assured that you grudge us our chance?"

That ended it. Reed and I put up our swords like two mastiffs who walk off stiff-legged and silent against another day. I missed Angus sorely. I was sure he would have sided with me. It was more than my judgment; I smelled disaster. And Neptune, who smelled my botherment, shoved his cold muzzle in my palm as I sat a bit apart with Wingo and his mate.

Angus had ceased to play with the guinea, had given it back to the Indian and gone to sleep; the rest gathered about the fire, bragging—as men will brag when their minds are jaundiced with yellow gold-tincture—of what figures they would cut in England, the while they sat in a Western wilderness, needing all their wits to get back with a whole skin.

And, as I sat, the vision of that Devon combe of mine with its ruined tower came up, and I saw it transmuted to a gallant castle with retainers and broad acres bought by gold. Myself at London, at court, preening it with the best, fitting out at my own cost further companies of adventurers; the idle dreams of early manhood gleaming golden, for the magic of the yellow stones that lay hid in the torrent gravel bars had laid its glamor upon me as with the rest. Our wine was gone, or there would have been a debauch. As it was, the men wore out their tongues in talk, and presently all was silent, save for the rush of the mountain stream and then, soft as a lullaby, Gilbert in song.

Let those who will their acres till
Or learn to shove an inky quill;
To bow and scrape with servile back
And cry, "My lord, what do ye lack?"
  Give me a life bravado.
An arm untired, a sword unhired,
A spirit with ambition fired,
To join me with some comrades bold
And hey to find the Land of Gold;
  To capture Eldorado!

For, an ye lose, why, what's to choose
'Twixt ye and those in beggars' shoes?
  At least ye've proved your mettle.
And, if ye find? With pockets lined
Ye'll find the whole wide world is kind
  To those who pluck the nettle.

Gold! Gold! The gift divine!
I pray the gods to make it mine
  Before I grow too old, sirs,
To know the joy that lurks in wine,
To see the eager, lovelight shine,
  And hear the chink of gold, sirs.

Chink! Chink! Women and drink!
The goblet's sip, the willing lip—
  All yours to taste and drain.
Chink! Chink! Making you blink;
Go take your meed of what ye need;
  Come, join in my refrain.
Gold! Gold! Yellow and cold;
Its magic charm dead hearts will warm;
  The old make young again.
Chink! Chink! The golden link
  That welds of Life the Chain!

Chink! Chink!

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CHAPTER XVI

THE VALE OF AHWAHNEE

WE BARELY waited for daylight to try our luck on the sandy and shingly bars where Wingo said the nuggets and specks would be found. The higher up the stream we went, the more we would discover, he told us, a statement that seemed of promise since the source of the gold must be in the seams of the hills themselves. And, as luck would have it, I was the first to find a thin, wafery fragment of the metal on a ledge.

After that there was no more thought of wisdom; I was at it with the rest, like a lot of children digging for farthings in a sand-pile. Our greatest success was with our helmets, in which, at Wingo's suggestion, we would pile the gravel and then swish about the water in a circular motion, allowing it to escape from the tilted cap so that the heavy gold sank to the bottom at last and could be seen gleaming amid the silt.

Wingo and his comrade followed us for a while, marveling to see us so eager after this yellow stuff, while we, no doubt, became vastly lowered in their estimation for setting such store on stones that were too soft for weapon points to be hammered from them. Soon the torrent became too swift, its bed too steep for the canoes to be used against its falling cataracts and rapid eddies, and, close to nooning, Wingo called a halt and announced that they could go no farther.

Also he warned us to cease the shouts with which we announced our separate finds; his fear of the flesh-eating Indians of the Great Valley was a very real and lively one. The name of the vale was Ah-wah-nee, he told me, and the people styled themselves Ah-wah-nee-chees, meaning "Children of the Sun." The legend said they had come from far to the east and had been brought to this especial paradise by the Sun-god himself. His face was carved upon one great cliff by his own hand, according to Wingo, and back of a high waterfall dwelt an evil spirit named Pohono, imprisoned there by the Sun-god. It was a place of great waters, also, Wingo assured us. There were born all the rivers of the west on the top of the high cliffs, down which they rushed while the thunder of their going shook the valley.

We paid small heed to him. We were getting more dextrous in washing out the gold, and the specks and nuggets grew ever larger and more numerous as we made our way up the stream, climbing on toward the mountains whose outward ramparts began to take shape and form. At night we stopped at the base of a waterfall some eight fathoms high. Gilbert had a fancy that we might divert the stream at its lip and so drain for a while the basin, or so still its whirling that we might search it for treasure.

We made camp, tired out, with, as I judged, some four pounds of gold in dust and specks and flaky nuggets, beaten thin by the pounding of the torrent, for our day's labor; we ate a full meal of trout and berries and, lulled by the steady rush of the cascade, fell fast asleep.

For once, and once only, even Neptune nodded deeper than his wont. All day he had waded and swum and charged to one from the other, evidently expecting each haul we made to contain some wonderful fish, barking loud as he shared the excitement of those he deemed far wiser than he was. And he curled up at my feet as dead beaten as his master. Peter was to take the first watch, and I the next. But he never called me, and I slumbered on to a ruder awakening.

Neptune's paws were on my chest, and his bark, barely to be heard above the waterfall, called me to my senses with a rush. The sun angled so that its rays caught the edge of the fall and made a blaze that dazzled me. A line fell in front of me with a loop in it that settled over Neptune's head and choked the wind from him before I slashed at it with my dagger and severed it. Other loops and lines were whirling between me and my comrades all rising stupidly from sleep.

There were no arrows, no attempt to close with us, and at the first I could not see our assailants, so busy was I slashing at these ropes of hide. Fortunately for me, for Angus, Gilbert and Reed, we had put on our corselets overnight, else the ropes had surely constricted our chests. Moreover, the steel served well for us to use as points on which to cut the ropes. But I saw two of the sailors being dragged away and Neptune dodging other loops. Then I got a hand free and fired a pistol, while Gilbert secured an arquebus and loosed it at

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some rocks where our foes were hidden.

The effect was marvelous. The lines were indrawn and, save for the noise of the fall, there was utter silence. We took advantage of the lull to arm ourselves fully and take up position among a cluster of boulders, where we intrenched.

Peter was missing. They must have crept up on us while we slept, the falling tumble of the cascade and, perchance, its fine spray dulling Neptune's senses until the last minute. Peter had been snared and dragged off, and, but for the dog, so would we have been. Still the silence held, minute after minute, while we waited for attack or the chance to take the offensive. But the Ah-wah-nee-chees seemed to have melted into the very air.

The torrent bed was deep, worn by ages of its rush, fed ever by the everlasting snows above. Terraced cliffs mounted on either side, ending in steep slopes, thick-furred with evergreen forest. Suddenly on the highest rim of the bare rock appeared a multitude of warriors completely surrounding us, their bronze bodies gleaming like statues of copper, leaning on spears and bearing clubs and bows and arrows. Their long hair streamed down their backs, bound about the brows with colored fillets in which were feathers. Save for a clout about their loins they were naked.

There was a dignity about their array, free from yells and uncouth gestures, that at once affected and reassured us, man-devourers as Wingo claimed them to be. They could see us plainly nested in our barricade, and for some minutes we gazed back and forth.

In a low tone I cautioned the rest against firing. The distance was too great for certain results, and, when we did use our arms—if we were driven to it—I felt that it should be a signal demonstration of our strange power. Also, we got up, the sun shining from our helmets and our body armor, presenting an undaunted front. Finally I advanced on to a platform of flat rock and threw up my right arm in greeting.

A warrior, his gesture copying mine, leaped down one terrace to a lower stand, so to the next, until he stood some ten yards above me. His body was perfect, the muscles rippling under his glistening skin as he moved as freely as a stag. His nose was shaped like the beak of an eagle; his forehead was high; his dark eyes wide apart and showing clear whites; his aspect at once proud and noble, of a race superior to the tribe of Wingo, equal in stature but far more finely shaped than any Tamal. He spoke in a deep voice words that I could not fathom and, seeing my ignorance, pointed superbly up the torrent and made gestures that we should accompany them, as I supposed, to Ah-wah-nee.

The wisest course seemed to be to obey. There were far too many of them for us to fight successfully, and they had not run at our gunfire, merely retreated with dignity. True, they had not seen us kill anything with this fire, but, so long as we could secure peace without forcing the issue, it seemed best to go along with them. There was Peter to be thought of. They might have taken him for sacrifice, and we could not leave his fate in uncertainty.

To my signs of inquiry the chief merely repeated his motion toward the mountains, a sign capable of wide interpretation. So, reserving display of what they might later deem magic, we started up-stream. The warriors escorted us, on the heights, sometimes unseen as the whims of the way took them in or out of the thick woods, always reappearing, silent, watchful, dignified. There were three or four hundred; it was difficult to gage their numbers with any exactness.

THAT was a long day's march, close to the edge of the torrent, sometimes forced into it by narrowing cliffs, always climbing upward toward the mountains with the torrent growing fiercer all the way and ever that silent escort keeping pace with us. At noon we made our own halt for food, and they seemingly did likewise. I had hoped that some deer or large animal would come within range of gun or pistol so that we might, without seeming to have made the opportunity, give them an object lesson, but none came for the target.

It was a queer situation with those imperturbable Indians on either side, speculating over us in their savage way, and we wondering what was in their minds. They seemed to regard us much as a man who sees and handles a bee for the first time, wary of its sting, mistrustful how well the insect may attack. If they were coaxing us to their stronghold with a view to later

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sacrificing us, I made up my mind that the Sun-god would have as many friends as foes upon his altars. And I went warily, looking for traps or ambush.

The stream turned sharply, cascading down a staircase-for giants; the cliffs heightened so that by midafternoon we traveled in shadow, going almost due south. We were forced from the torrent bed to higher ground, but ever the Indians kept their distance—whether in fear or reverence we could not tell but hoped it one of these.

Suddenly we came around a shoulder of the hill and saw, shining like marble, a great cliff of chiseled whiteness, astrut from the ground, and across from it another wall cleft into three cones atop, with a silver gush of water down its face. These formed a gateway. Beyond showed peaks and pinnacles, domes and half domes and, back of these, again, airy peaks wrought in a fantastic tracery of azure and crystal.

"This must be Ah-wah-nee," Gilbert said, as we halted, struck with the rare beauty of the place, a beauty at once enticing and forbidding as if giants had worked with the daintiness of fairies to rear them a mammoth temple. Through this gate the stream issued, dwarfed to a silver wire beside the stupendous dignity of these monuments.

Though they were too great for man, yet they seemed too regular for Nature to have reared. The white cliff was sheer, a noble precipice that must have been a thousand yards in height. Trees on its summit looked like grass; from them men must have seemed like ants crawling on the valley floor. The Indians might well believe that the gods had carved this tabernacle of the wilderness.

It was awesome, and, when Gilbert pointed out to us the sculptured features of a head with lofty brow and stern, arching nose and resolute chin, showing in low relief midway between brink and pedestal, the silence of the place seemed to grip our souls and compel involuntary worship.

I say silence, for, though all the air was filled with sound, it seemed so timed with our own pulses as to be rather a feeling of the spirit than the body. It was like the deep exalting pealing of a mighty organ, this constant shaking of the air, cliff calling unto cliff with the living tongues of water. Everywhere, it seemed, tons of water spouted in columns that broke to smoky spray. One fall was half a mile in drop, I swear. At its base the sun turned the mist to rainbows shimmering like jewel-fire. The valley floor was an enameled mead, emerald grass starred with flowers and the river, now flowing peacefully in long sweeps under willows in its midst, while set all about, as if in a park, were clumps of trees.

Now our escort had closed in, seeming to watch our bearing covertly. We restrained our admiration, though these towers, these spouts of speaking water, appeared as some unroofed cathedral where the spirit of the place was present, if not visible, and laid its compelling bidding on the soul to acknowledge openly and reverently its power. On we went, treading springy turf, on to where conical buildings showed beneath trees beside a widening of the stream just below its forking. Here were the lodges of the Ah-wah-nee-chees, poles set in a cone and covered with wicker and with branches, cool, sweet and pleasant.

We saw no women as we came up, only a body of men wrapped in blankets of gaudy hues, their hair feathered with raying quills, their faces parti-colored with red and white clays. They seemed expecting us, though no rock held less motion or expression than their unchanging features. The chief came forward and motioned us toward two of their dwellings. I shook my head and signified that we would camp in the open.

There was a pause, and the chief seemed to consult silently with one of the men who had waited our coming, a tall person of evident consequence, swathed in his blanket, with the eyes of a hawk in his ruddled face. Then meat and fish and berries were brought to us, with acorn meal, also wood for burning. We were to be left alone for the present and well treated. I saw no sign of Peter. Around us in a great circle stood the warriors with their leaders closer, the hundreds of eyes shifting in accord to our every move as, striving to act with dignity equal to theirs, we went about our usual preparations.

When the fire was laid, there was a strained shifting in the ranks, and the chiefs came in yet closer to watch how the white men made fire. The smoke of their own burnings showed here and there through the trees, but none offered us a brand; so I took flint and steel and tinder,

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snapped the spark, blew softly on it and got the flame that clambered through the twigs and branches merrily.

"As I got up, I knew that we had scored. Nothing had been said, but you could feel the thought that ran among them. It must have looked as if I had breathed forth flame, and later I found this was their interpretation. Mayhap it saved us. I can not now tell, for there were other tests to come, but I am convinced that for the time it put off Peter's death.

Neptune with his black, curling coat, was a source of wonder to them. Belike they took him for a bear of sorts, and he, for his part, treated them with a dignified aloofness I strove to copy. And I passed the quiet word to all the men to act as if we were quite alone, telling them that in this lay our safety.

We split the night into four, watching by pairs. When our onlookers left us, it was hard to tell. The shadows came on and seemed to absorb them. Gilbert and I took the second watch, and toward the end of it the moon sailed over the strip of sky between the beetling cliffs, and they were gone. The vale of Ah-wah-nee, the dwelling of the Children of the Sun, trembled in time and tune to the vibrating air that beat against the lofting walls as, like molten silver, the cataracts poured over the lips of the gorge and broke into dust of diamonds like torn fragments of the veil of the Sun-god's bride, the Moon.

CHAPTER XVII

PETE

WE WERE two weeks in the valley, two weeks in which we were treated with a grave courtesy only marred by the thinly veiled curiosity of the Ah-wah-nee-chees. The place was made free to us, save that the gateway was barred by sentinels, backed by a considerable force which we did not challenge. And we saw no women nor saw nor heard aught of Peter. From the second day, when the chiefs first attempted talk with us by sign, picture and word, I set down their words upon my tablets and studied them until rapidly Gilbert and myself, he studying with me, acquired a certain facility in their simple speech that astonished them.

So we informed them of our purpose to pass through to the south, even showing them our map, whereat they were greatly interested. In turn they told us that great waterless deserts lay beyond steep mountains, over which they had been brought by the Sun-god, generations since; that some of them had attempted to pass back to the lands of their forefathers and had perished from heat and lack of water, for the old springs had dried up.

Also, we learned that the great annual feast and sacrifice to the betrothal of the Sun-god with his bride the Moon-goddess, was at hand; that every month the Sun wooed the Moon at the full and took her in his arms, hiding her in his bosom until slowly she emerged again to once more reappear bright and shining for their next embrace.

And now, at the time of harvest, was the big festival (Fall of the year). But of Peter I could get them to say nothing, and I feared that he was held for sacrifice, misshapen as he was. With the chief, whose name was Watono, I achieved some sort of friendship, but between us and the hawk-faced priest, Potusi, enmity ever increased as the moon waxed.

This more I learned, that the women were kept apart in a ravine called Lehamite and not suffered to look upon us strangers. That at the end of this ravine was a tortuous way out of the valley, ever guarded against their tribal enemies, the Monos, who lived by a lake on the borders of the desert. And that the only other way from Ah-wah-nee was to the west, up great cliffs by narrow slippery trails and through a vast forest of silence where the great trees, called Wawona, caused madness to him who wandered under them.

Little by little I gained all this and pieced it out at night with Gilbert. Angus seemed to improve in slight degree but was still childish, and Simon Reed glowered ever from being forced from his gold-gathering. But little by little we formed a plan. The day before the moon was full, we must escape by the way of the wood called Wawona. There appeared to be no tribe there like the Tamals, albeit the trees seemed to be the same, though of even larger girth and height.

I could well understand the awe of such a place for a savage. To pass a night there was to die, said Watono. We would chance that death, and the fear would hinder the

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pursuit once we got a clear start. There was a guard at the trail beginning, a slim path that led up to the side of one high waterfall. This guard we must overpower. The hard thing was to get hold of Peter, for none, not even Reed, thought of abandoning him. And I had a plan to discover where he was lodged. This hope lay in Neptune.

It was the twelfth day when we had worked out this plan, and that same day a circumstance happened to aid us. With Watono I wandered down the stream toward the gateway, Neptune with us, and we went swimming in a pool together, Neptune keeping watch upon my clothes, though they were safe enough. For, as we said naught of what was in our minds, neither did the Indians, though I doubted not that we should play a prime part on the day and night of the festival if we were still in Ah-wah-nee. Only Potusi sometimes looked at us with a hint of malicious amusement.

Coming out of the pool, I dressed, but Watono had merely adjusted breech-clout and his belt of white deerskin, from which pended his knife in a beaded scabbard, when he caught sight of some luscious berries growing in a patch across the stream and crossed the shallows at the foot of the pool, mounting the bank to gather them, for the day was hot and the fruit juicy. I was still adjusting my more cumbersome attire, fastening my corselet, when I heard a fierce coughing grunt from the berry patch and a sharp cry from Watono; only one before the bushes shook and waved, thrashing about in some furious, hidden struggle. I caught up my musket and, calling to Neptune, dashed through the tickle and up the bank.

A monstrous bear was at close grips with Watono. Its claws had scored the chieftain's side and the flesh hung from his ribs so that you could see the grisly shine of his bones. With one arm he still offstood the brute, grasping desperately the shaggy throat and with his right hand driving home his knife. There were gouts of blood upon the bear, but, stab as he might, the blade seemed unequal to reaching a vital part, and the muscular strength of the brute was to his as that of a giant to a child. Once more the bear's paw ripped at his flesh, tearing through the shoulder muscles, and then Neptune charged home while I danced, waiting for a chance to hit the bear and avoid the man.

The brave dog nipped valiantly at the flank of the brute. It whirled, sending Watono senseless with one final buffet, scooped at Neptune, who dodged scot free, barking and snapping again to the attack, trying to turn the bear that rushed straight at me with open mouth and flailing forelegs, standing on its haunches like a man.

The tangle of the briars nearly tripped me as I tried to step aside, and then I blazed away at its chest. The force of the slugs failed to stop the weighted lunge of the beast, though it coughed up a shower of bright blood that sprayed me, collar to heel. The bushes held me in a net. I threw aside the musket and essayed to fire my pistol, and a side swipe from its armored paw sent the weapon spinning, smashed beyond redemption, jarring my arm to numbness.

I saw Neptune in midair, flying at the bear's throat; I saw its yellow tusks, through which the red blood poured, and flung myself backward to avoid the lightning swing of its other foreleg. The blow got home. It would surely have shelled me and swept out my vitals from my chest had it not been for my corselet. I have the rusted steel to this day with the scoring of those iron claws upon it and the dent in the stout metal. The next moment I was lying in a bath of blood, the heavy carcass of the bear, still palpitating, grinding me into the soil and Neptune growling as he worried it.

The shots, the sounds of the fight, with Neptune's loud barks, had brought a dozen Indians swiftly to the scene. They entered the berry patch as I got from beneath the dead beast, a gory sight, smeared and adrip with blood, looking, without doubt, the murderer of Watono, above whom two Ah-wah-nee-chees were bending. For the moment they did not see the bear and bent their bows upon me. One loosed his arrow and the shaft struck with a *tang* upon my armor and glanced off. Then the two by Watono cried them to desist, and in a trice I was a hero.

Mangled as he was, Watono made light of his wounds, though he allowed them to plait swiftly a hurdle litter from green willows. He made them carry him to where the bear lay and surveyed it. The heavy charge had torn open its chest; heart and lungs were pulp; only its

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tremendous life force had kept it coming on after its vitals were smashed.

In his last moment of consciousness Watono had seen the flash from my musket and heard the report. He knew that I had practised magic, and, as it showed I was unscratched, his wonder grew with his gratitude. Potusi, he said, would soon heal his flesh wounds; no bones were broken, and soon he would be about again. And I was to be his brother of blood, his sworn friend and ally.

All this seemed fortunate, but that it did not suit Potusi was very manifest in the leering look of hate he gave me when we reached the main camp. There was one quality about this doctor-priest to be admired, a quality that aided to make him the wise man of his tribe, and that lay in a certain directness of attack once his policy was determined upon.

It was plain to see that matters between us had come to an issue with this new friendship between Watono and myself in the ripening. If we were really gods, Potusi wanted to get rid of us and keep his own supremacy intact. As friends of Watono's we were also likely to challenge his own rule, for, gods or not, we had magic. And Potusi wished to be master of all the magic shown in Ah-wah-nee. His ambition was laudable enough; we were strangers, being of another race and color, disturbers of his kingdom.

On the other hand, we had been brought there against our own will, for all our showing of assent. Doubtless Potusi would have been glad to let us go on our way, but he would not give up Peter, and we would not leave without him.

WATONO was borne away for the dressing of his wounds, and presently Potusi came to our camp, where I had cleansed myself as best I could of the bear's foulness, and squatted down in front of where I sat upon a log. It was his way of making audience as it was his way to sit silent, believing that the first to speak showed weakness. My log was in a shady spot, and I was content to wait.

Gilbert sat not far off, endeavoring to patch his breeches, which were the worse for wear, with some fine skins of fawn. Reed lay dozing, and the sailors were at various tasks, with Angus amusing himself with whittling a stick.

Now Angus had a silver pipe and some small store of tobacco. I had tried the habit and knew the trick, though I could not like the process. But here was a chance to bewilder Potusi, and I knew that he had come to us with no idle purpose. What this purpose was, I knew not, but here was a chance for straight talk with the advantage on our side of having saved Watono's life. Whether Potusi or Watono was the more powerful was yet to be seen, but the incident and the display of the powers of the musket had worried Potusi, for all his mask of a face and lack of emotion. He had made one big mistake in coming to us at all rather than sending.

"Angus," I said in a low, even voice, "hast thy pipe and weed with thee?"

"Aye. In my pouch."

"Lend them to me a while. Not yet. Not till I send Neptune for them."

"Is it a game?" Angus spoke eagerly as an infant promised fun.

"Aye, a game with this dark man. Wait. Go on shaping thy stick."

"It is to be a cat," said Angus. "I shall sharpen it at both ends so it will tip and spring into the air when I strike it with my stick."

"That will be grand," I said and lapsed into silence, my hand on Neptune's head caressing it back of the ears.

Potusi, without moving, shuttled his eyes between Angus and myself while we were speaking, then he fastened them again on mine. Quiet we sat while the ground shadow shifted a full fathom, the insects buzzing all about us, Reed snoring in the shade, Gilbert sewing at his breeches, and death and disaster being planned in the brain of Potusi. Then I touched Neptune.

"To Angus, lad!" I whispered as I bent over him.

The good dog got up, yawned and stretched, then trotted soberly over to the laird. I had feared that Angus had forgotten, but, as Neptune stood expectant and—to my delight—gave a short impatient bark as if talking, the laird produced his pipe and leather bag of weed, and Neptune, mouthing them gently, brought them back to me.

Carelessly I filled the barrel of the pipe, seeing it drew well, struck spark to tinder and set the glowing mass upon the tobacco. Then for another half hour we sat while I sent smoke from my lips and matched my

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gaze with Potusi. Tiny beads broke out upon his forehead at the last. He knew how much or how little he could do and feared I could do more. And he saw I was not afraid of him.

Solemnly I puffed, though the weed produced the qualms it ever did with me, but I mastered them and sent out thread after thread of blue smoke to spiral in the air. A simple trick enough, but it is the unknown that scores, no matter how simple the means. To Potusi I breathed fire. He had suspected this already, and now he had full demonstration of it. I could see him pulling himself together before dread mastered him.

"It may be ye are gods," he said. "I know not. It may be ye are only half-gods, for ye eat and sleep and grow tired as men do. Also, one of ye is my captive, and a god, or one whose friends were gods, would not suffer that. I too am a half-god. If ye are more powerful than I am, I do not want ye to remain. If I am more powerful than you, I can hold ye for my purpose unless I choose to let ye go."

This was the sense of what he said in the jerky manner of speech that held between us. I finished my pipe and replied nothing. To have shown the joyful relief I felt at knowing that Peter was really alive and unharmed would have been an admission of ignorance it were wise not to display.

"I am a friend of Watono," I said. "Soon we shall be blood-brothers. Why should there be talk of which is the stronger between your people and mine? We mean you no harm, be we gods or not. We wish only to depart in peace or, perhaps, dwell with ye a while in friendship if so Watono desires."

"What Watono desires, I may not," he answered. "And we share the rule of this tribe. Mayhap I am the stronger if it comes to the test. I am willing ye should go. Tonight."

"With the man you hold captive. Not without."

"Ye came upon our land; ye sought stones ye deemed precious in our river. The man is rightly forfeit to us."

"Ye can have back your stones."

"Are we children, to value pebbles?"

"I go not without my friend. Of what use is he to you as sacrifice? If his life was forfeit, I have reclaimed it with Watono's."

"Nay," said Potusi. "My people clamor for a fitting sacrifice to the gods, or our harvest may be scanty. If the gods fail us, we perish. The more precious the sacrifice, the greater will be their gifts."

"But he is misshapen."

"Would you then give me one of your straight men in exchange?" asked Potusi cunningly. "Yet do we hold and know that a man is born with such a hump upon his back because he is blessed of the gods, not accursed. It is a sign that he shall bear the burdens of others' faults. Give me this man and go in peace."

"He shall go with us," I answered.

Potusi laughed.

"Find him and take him, white man," he said. "Let thy magic smell him out and protect him. But hasten, or it will be too late. The Moon-goddess is nearly full. Ere she is in the arms of the Sun-god, your friend's blood will be steaming on my sacrificial stone. All of you are in my power, and I shall use you also when the time comes for my purposes."

"Watono—Watono," I started and stopped.

I had erred. To show I depended upon Watono's friendship gave the wizard a lead. A light sparkled in his eyes. He chuckled. I fancied he would not dare to harm Watono but I did not sense all his craft.

"I shall smell out my friend tonight," I went on. "And, when the time comes, Potusi, we will match powers. Save for my friendship to Watono, this is what I could do to the tribe. Behold!"

I had knocked out the ashes from my pipe and, under cover of the act, secured from my powder-horn a goodly double-pinch. Our fire was smoldering. I got up and stood near it, holding the powder in my palm.

"I have but to open my hand," I said, "and I can scatter the Ah-wah-nee-chees as dry leaves in the wind."

I had not been with mine uncle for naught. I have said that he affected certain tricks of hand-quickness, and, to cover these, he ever aided himself by diverting the eye of the onlooker. As I spoke and turned my hand over to fling the powder in the coals, I kicked a-purpose a stone toward Potusi. For a half-second he watched it; the next there was a low roar, an upflinging of flame, charcoal and half-burned branches, and the fire scattered.

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I still stood away, my arm up, the palm downward, as in command. As luck would have it, most of the force went toward Potusi in sparks and scorching ash, and, in his sudden haste to rise, he tumbled from his squat, sprawling for a moment like a backed crab. I turned away to Gilbert while the wizard picked himself up and went scowling off.

"I could not follow thee well," said Gilbert. "What said he?"

I told him.

"Tonight we find Peter," I said. "Or rather, Neptune shall find him. The lad's extra jerkin is in my pack. It is a long chance, but I doubt not that Neptune can pick up the scent if we cast far enough to cross it. I have a notion he may be with the women in the ravine of Lehamite."

"In that case," said Simon Reed, who had come up to listen, "count me a volunteer to follow Neptune."

"Thou hast caused trouble enough in such fashion," I said coldly. "An thou dost meddle with their women, Reed, thou sealest the fate of all of us."

"For my part, I should not so much mind," said Reed swaggeringly. "It would be a happy death if the women were good to look upon and generous. I would as soon die that way as live a monk. But, for that matter, if Peter be in this place with the women, where there is a guard set—as ye know—of what avail is Neptune's nose, since he will not get near enough to smell him and we can not pass the guards? Besides," he added sourly, "with all your monkish virginity, Trevennion, thou art apt to be killed for meddling as I would be in such a venture. Best wait until they bring him out to sacrifice and take him by force."

THERE was sooth in what he said about the women, but, as to the retaking of Peter by force, I feared their numbers. These were not cowards. We could kill but a few at the best, and the rest would soon rally. We might kill Potusi and chance the issue, but I doubted the wisdom of such a chance.

"Peter may not be in the valley with the women after all," I said. "We can try elsewhere tonight. If we do find him, we must plan a rescue. And, where we may not venture, I can send the dog."

"They will turn him into a porcupine," said Reed.

"We shall see," I answered.

Reed ever rasped me as sour fruit will set your teeth on edge. I called Gilbert, and we went down the stream together.

"Here is what I was looking for," I said as we came to a mass of willows where new growths sprang from between old rotted stumps.

Once more Uncle Zadik came to our aid. Among his simples and his herbs was apt to be much spunk or touchwood made from rotted willows. This held witchfire that he stuffed in the eye-sockets of skulls to be set in dark places.

I had marked the blue flickering flame of this same ghostly fire shining at night in the roots of the willows. Now it was not visible, but I knew the nature of the stuff, and Gilbert and I plucked out quantities of the dead wood and bore it back to camp. After the night meal I called Neptune to us, and together we rubbed him well with spunk until he appeared to emit a pallid flame and our own hands glowed weirdly. The success was startling. Neptune was a ghost dog.

"We'll carry more of the stuff with us," I said, "and at the last moment reanoint him."

For I felt sure that Peter was in the ravine called Lehamite. I could send Neptune in to find him, and his appearance was such that the stoutest guard would let him pass. To his collar I attached a knife, a horn of ink, a pen and a scrap of parchment that Peter might send back a message if Neptune could win through to him. On one side I wrote a line of cheer and inquiry.

It was quite dark when we set out, with Neptune trotting between Gilbert and myself. Simon Reed, to my content, had got hold of some strong liquor the Indians brewed from wild honey, like mead, and he was in a drunken stupor. Off to the south and west a great fall, its leap broken into three cascades, showed gray against the wall, for the moon was not due for some while. We wanted to try the little ravine while the blackness showed best the witchfire on Neptune's curly hide. It was a creepy thing to look down on him, gliding along on his soft pads, his outline vague, uncertain, marked with shifting, creeping flame.

Under cover of the voice of the great fall that set all the air athrob, we advanced within bowshot of the entrance to Lehamite

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and climbed cautiously upon the side cliff, trying to peer into the black void of the gap. We could see nothing of the guards we knew were there, but far up showed the red spark of a fire. I rubbed Neptune afresh with the willow spunk and let him sniff at Peter's extra jerkin. He quivered with excitement and gave a throaty growl to show he understood. I headed him toward the little valley and whispered in his ear:

"Peter. Go seek. Go seek!"

I let go his leather collar—I carried the golden one for state occasions only—and with a whimper of eagerness he was off, a pallid, bounding streak of living lambency, soon lost in the thick brush.

Whether the guards saw him, we never knew. Or the women. We heard no unusual sound above the constant note of the fall now deadened by a shoulder of the cliff as we waited hour after hour and a radiance began to show above the eastern wall that meant moonrise. At last there was a rustle close to us, and Neptune bounded up, much of his ghostliness departed, full of news he could not tell us. I fumbled with his collar and unloosed the scrap of parchment just as the moon disk soared clear of the cliff and dappled all the vale with silver as it sailed among fleecy clouds. The light was strong enough to read by.

I am well treated and, save o' nights, I have some liberty. Methinks they are too kinde. I have seen hogges fatted for a killing. Yet fear not. Tomorrowe, ere moonrise, look for me at your campe by the streme. I was a lackbrain, but ye have given me the hinte. Thanks for the knife. PETER.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FIERY FROG

THE thirteenth day dawned. Whether the number proved unlucky or not, this day must see us away from the valley or courting disaster by pitting ourselves against the full strength of the tribe. From early morning the provisions for the day of feast and sacrifice on the morrow were in progress. Enormous quantities of food were brought in by the hunters, and we gathered that in Lehamite the women were weaving garlands.

There was a difference in the way we were accosted that proclaimed some crisis at hand. The hunters who had been absent for some days regarded us arrogantly, as a butcher would look at stalled calves, and there was that in their eyes that told us for what fate we had been reserved; why we had been fatted and given exercise. Our minds coaxed to be at ease. These Ah-wah-nee-chees were adepts at preparing the larder for their favorite repast.

On the morrow Potusi would play some trick, likely that of drugged food, to take us without the fight that might mar the comeliness of our bodies for their own carvers. It was not a cheerful thought, and I feared, noting the looks bestowed upon us, that even the promise of Watono's blood-brotherhood might not serve to keep us from becoming meat. True, we had seen no evidence of cannibalism, but Wingo's warning held fresh significance.

It was in my mind that the ceremony of blood-brotherhood might tend to save my life alone in Watono's gratitude, and I was pondering how best to turn it to our mutual advantage when Potusi came to our camp.

"Did ye smell out your friend last night?" he asked.

There was uneasy suspicion in his voice and look. I had to hazard whether Neptune had been seen. If so and I did not play my part well, Peter might be put in some securer place. But he did not look at the dog, and I chanced it, answering indifferently:

"When the time comes, we will find him."

A dry chuckle came from the wizard.

"Aye, ye will find him when the time comes," he said.

"How is Watono, my brother-to-be?" I asked.

"He is in a sound sleep from the draft I gave him that his flesh might start to heal against the feast," he said, and this time his chuckle shone from his eyes.

He had purposely drugged Watono in his wise as doctor. There would be no opportunity for blood-brotherhood before the feast. Potusi had seen to that. It was a clever trick.

"Then I shall see him tomorrow," I said.

"Aye, thou shalt see him tomorrow without fail."

He left us with the croaking chuckle deep in his throat.

The day dragged. In the afternoon, for the first time, the women came down from

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their ravine. Most of them were comely, and all of them were young. They bore great baskets of berries and early nuts and stacks of fragrant fern, carrying them to the central village where the feast was to be held. As they passed, they sang a chant and turned curious eyes upon us. Simon Reed swaggered before them, and some laughed. But the merriment held no friendship. To my mind, the presence of the women was proof of our fate. We were no longer merely prisoners of an alien race but victims.

Peter was not with them. Doubtless the old crones had been left to guard him, unless the younger ones returned at nightfall. So much the better for Peter; so much the better for us if, at the last, we had to fight our way to him between midnight and dawn, after the moon rose. If things came to this, we must win through the pass, fight with the Monos if need be and brave the desert.

I was landsick. All of us were. Studying the map of Mercator, I had conceived a plan to risk the Spanish galleons—which by this time, knowing Drake gone, should have retreated southward—and to make our way in sight of the sea, if not upon it, to the narrow land by Panama. Thence we could cross to the Mexico Gulf and avoid the waterless wastes. The sea would hearten us, and it should be hard if we could not build some sort of craft for coasting. This, if we escaped through the Wawona wood with Peter.

We had already set aside certain food for our venture. The afternoon we spent overhauling our equipment. There were not wanting ominous signs to urge us to set edge to our blades and examine priming-pans and flints. At first groups came and gazed at us; then these became a crowd and then a cordon, watching us with a silence that was no longer neutral but sinister. We were going, it appeared, to have to fight our way out.

Even Angus became uneasy, whetting his long sword-blade upon a lava stone, something of fire returning to his eyes. I imagine my own feelings were those of the rest, a growing impatience to be up and at them, to die if needs be, but to sell our lives dearly, going down in the lust of battle that knows neither fear nor pain, only the exultant joy of measuring strength with strength, warding the blow and sending home the steel.

Gilbert sang in snatches a battle-chant that held a strange lilt so that all of us kept time to it, nodding our heads or tapping the hilts of our weapons. It is a strange thing, this force of rhythm oft repeated, set to warlike words. The pulses swing to it, and the blood heats till it seems to seethe and froth in the veins, working up the soul to deeds of derring-do and welcoming all odds.

Always, I wot, the fighting man has brought himself into such fine frenzies before the onset, the forlorn hope whipping despair into resolution. With thrum of savage drum and whine of flute, with the roll of the sheepskin, the blare of bugles, or the strong plucking of strings—so have ever brave hearts grown braver to the thrill of music, rude or strangely harmonized. We sang softly, for the sound seemed to irritate our enemies, and we did not want to force the issue until Peter had had his chance to come in. I held great confidence of Peter's cunning, and I knew he would work out a plan that would carry far.

The night came down; dusk flooded the great valley in violet, then purple and at last in blackness, with a light wind moving the trees and the roar of the waters dominating all. We kept up our fire, and by its light we could see the shifting of shadows that meant the cordon was maintained about us. I fancied that the dawn would signal some attempt at our capture, and I feared a sudden flinging of the hide ropes with which they were so expert. Against this we lay flat on the ground the while, our arms handy, our spirits vigilant. Above the stars marched, marking the hours.

Far off from the northern end of the valley there sounded, clear-drawn, piercing through the boom of the cataracts, the shrill cry of some wild, hunting beast. Neptune, who had been uneasily suppressing whimpers, crouched flat beside me, rose to his feet, and I put my hand upon his neck. To my surprize his mane was unruffed, and he turned and licked my hand as the blood-curdling cry was repeated closer and closer. Back of the oncoming beast, as I surmised, though it was hard to distinguish sound with the thunder of the waters, one could hear faint shouts.

We were lodged on the western side of the river, and toward the south the trees left open a long vista backed by the thrice-divided fall. Down this wide lane appeared a luminous spot, advancing with incredible

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speed, a thing that leaped into the air and howled and sometimes broke into a hideous laughter much as the hyenas cackle amid the hills of the Coast of Barbary. Form it had none that was definite; long limbs seemed to wave from it in front while it was propelled by legs that elevated its stern like a bear's. It seemed to be covered with shaggy fur that hung over its head, and it shimmered with a ghostly radiance.

On it came, leaping high like some frog fiend of fire and emitting dread noises that were drowned by the yells of terror-stricken warriors. We could hear them crashing through the brush. Some blundered through our camp, striding through the fire as if it had been a puddle of water, racing away in mad confusion from this livid, unnatural object.

Neptune quivered all over but made no sign of fear or anger, and with one final ear-splitting shriek Peter, mother-naked, save for a mat of long wool about his shoulders and face—where curving horns jutted—scuttled on toes and fingers into the camp, almost breathless, panting, a weird sight with his humped back, his ape-long arms and skinny legs, his body limned with witch-fire, the tanned fleece and horns of a mountain-goat adding to his horrible aspect.

"I said I'd come," he got out and lay upon his side with his tongue lolling like a dog's, while Neptune nosed him and I fetched him water and Gilbert found him clothes.

"Now must we get hence," I said. "It will come to Potusi's ears that you have couched in our camp, and he will smell a trick. We must be well to the eastward wall before the moon comes up."

WE SPLASHED across the chilly ford unmolested and, helping Peter, who was well-nigh spent, headed for the narrow trail that zigzagged up the cliffs toward the wood of Wawona. The valley of Ah-wah-nee was nowhere more than a mile wide, and it did not take us long to reach the foot of the path. This writhed up one side of a gorge called Tenaya, where more waterfalls tumbled. I had inspected it casually by daylight and knew where to expect the guard. And now behind us rose a babble of shouting, faint but distinct, that announced that our escape had been discovered. The sound of a barken horn hooted, and out of the night a shower of arrows whistled as the watchers caught sight of us, for the moon was cresting the cliff at last and shining down the gorge to betray the steel of our corselets. At the first sound of the horn I had called to the rest to flatten themselves, and the shafts went over us.

"Up, fire and charge with the steel!" I yelled.

The flare of the guns hit the dark, and their roar reechoed in the gorge as the slugs hurtled among the guardians of the trail. We followed with drawn blade, charging the steep pitch with Peter struggling to keep up, broken-winded as he was, and Neptune barking as he dashed in to do his share.

It did not last long. The bullets and our headlong rush swept them aside. Angus, I noted, was fighting with the rest of us. Single file was the best we could achieve on that narrow way, and many an Ah-wah-nee-chee went crashing to his death below whilst others scrambled through brush and trees to escape our fire. Once through and above them, the rest was simple. The pursuit came after swiftly at the first, but, as they got too nigh for comfort, we had but to give them a volley, and the heart went out of them.

We were high above the sea and climbing higher, and our lungs and hearts were sorely taxed by the speed we made so that we were fain to rest on the rim of the valley that lay below, scooped out of the hills like a basin for a god that held the last runnel of his laving, while the spouts ever sent down fresh water. South and east peak lofted upon peak beneath the silver shine, soaring cloudlike in their snowy crests, sentinels of the desert that lay beyond them. Back of us, as we stood looking for any signs of the tribe, lay the dense mass of a forest, the wood of Wawona, to sleep in the shadow of which was death.

It was a solitude of silence. The great shafts shot up free of bough or leaf for full fifty feet, breaking into plumes that seemed funereal as they showed against the sky in certain places where the trees were less thickly clustered. We walked on the fallen needles of centuries, our steps padded, while the age-old trees, too proud to whisper, looked down upon us with the dignified contempt of those who have seen the birth and fall of nations and deem the life of man a petty thing and man himself nothing more than a groundling.

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Never the chirp of a bird, the sound of any living thing, broke the stillness. As on Tamal, one conjured up awful beasts that must surely abide in such a place—dragons, long-tusked elephants and the like. But here was nothing save our puny selves taking tiny steps beneath these pillars of the world—lofting four hundred feet above us—speaking softly to each other once in a while as children who wander in a wood and, fearing that they know not what, reach out for hands. But we got through at last, and, lo, the moon, sinking westward, seemed as a lamp set in a window for our reassurance!

For sixteen days we wandered on toward the coast, descending slope after slope to the marshy plain and so with great caution over the lower ranges that we trusted guarded the sea, hurrying at the end through a pass that funneled the welcome tang that was as the breath of life to us sailors, the west wind savored with the salt of the sea.

The presence of deer and other game reassured us as to Indians, and we made our best speed to come out upon a prominence clothed with the weirdest wizardry of trees that ever my eyes beheld before or since. These cypress, hoary, bent and twisted by the winds into a hundred shapes of bird and beast, writhing along the ground in gray contortions, seeming to shudder in the face of an eternity of storm and stress.

One tree there was that looked for all the world like one of the great birds of Patagonia, another like a witch amount a broomstick. They had grown in the barren scanty soil among gray promontories that footed down to a sea of the most marvelous sapphire, where tiny islets, each crowned with one discouraged tree, thrust up amid the blue.

Farther out were rocky fangs stretching across the cord of a crescent bay bound by a glare of white, level sands. On these rocks spotted sea-leopards sported or swam races between their stations. The day was clear, and the great ocean lay like a great blue jewel, softly heaving to the paler horizon. A gentle river ran to a sand-barred lagoon, flowers sprang from short turf in bright enameling, and here again, as on Mount Tamal, came the scent of lilacs, later-blooming here.

Our hearts leaped to the welcome of the waves, but they leaped higher when we saw, crouched in a cradle of the rocks, a little caravel. Its mast was gone, its rigging trailed like weed, but the deck was sound, and, as we clambered out to the craggy jut of a gray cape to look the better, we could see no sign of cruel injury. Some gale, raising the waves, seemed to have saddled the craft, riding it in, to place it, as a giant's child might place a cast-off toy for forlorn wandering human infants to find with glee.

We scanned anxiously the vast horn of the bay for sign of smoke or action, but the coast was lonely as a desert, and we made swift shift to scramble down to her.

CHAPTER XIX

WE SET TO SEA

THE caravel had not escaped serious damage after all, else had it not been abandoned. That it had been one of the fleet sent out after Drake was evident, for it was mounted with culverins, and there was a store of pikes and some small arms in racks and, better than all, powder-casks and bullet-kegs that, in their haste to take to the small boats—all missing—they had left behind.

A great hole yawned in the stern, and the rudder was shattered. The sails had flapped to rags and blown to sea; the bowsprit was gone by the stem, and the bulwarks were beaten down. But the hatches had held, and a stout bulkhead built beneath the poop from main-deck to keel-strake was intact. We set to work feverishly, dreading the advent of Indians in force to halt our ship-building.

Back in the hills we found a pine where a fire had swept the forest and killed the tree with barking yet left its strength. It was straight and fairly dried so that we hailed it as a god-gift and hauled it down to set in place for mast and sprit and boom. From between decks we tore out planks so that forward of the aft bulkhead we left the caravel as empty as a cask and managed to patch the yawn in the stern and to piece together a rudder. Our greatest treasure was a keg of nails and spikes. I say our greatest, for without these we had never seen the waters of the Atlantic. But this came later.

There were some spare sails in the *fore*-peak, and these we joined until we had a great lug rigged and furled about its boom. Then we went to hunting. The bay was filled with strange fishes that bit fiercely at a

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hook baited with a rag, and of these we made stockfish with salt from sun-dried, shallow rock-pools.

From the woods we got deer and many birds, from the stream pure water, working as long as there was light, never bothered by alarm from Indians, at which we marveled, until it struck me that, as the wood of Wawona had awed the Ah-wah-nee-chees, so might these wizard cypresses, mounting guard upon the cliffs, strike terror to the coast savages as a place accursed. Whatever the cause, we were content.

Came the day when our mended and stone-ballasted vessel lay in its rocky bed, waiting to be relaunched into the deep. This problem was the one fault that we feared and failed to speak of while we worked to get the little ship ready. There was but one way to do it. I have said the ship lay cradled. Fore and aft were weedy boulders on which she was rested, notched and balanced as in the ways. Her stern was elevated and she appeared, ready to slide into the water, save that the forward boulders wedged her too firmly.

At low tide much of this rock was exposed. In it were various crevices that we deepened, working as the ebb dropped. Here we planned to places charges of powder, tamped down with clay from the bed of the creek. When the fuses were set and lighted, the rest lay in the mercy of God. None of us was engineer enough to know whether, as the play has it, we should be hoist with our own petard. If the charges were too heavy, they might rack our craft to a sieve.

But there was scant use in grieving over what could neither be offset nor avoided, and so one dawn beheld us at low tide working knee-deep in water below the suspended bows, ramming down powder, plugging it home with fuses made of untwisted rope smeared with wet powder.

We were hard at it when Neptune, whom I had left on deck with Peter as lookout, barked and Peter's head appeared above the rail, his eyes goggled with excitement.

"Canoes!" he cried. "A flotilla of canoes coming around the point!"

There was no chance to discuss their possible friendliness. Whether they had known scathe of the Spaniards aforetime or whether they judged all men not of their tribe enemies, I know not, but they set up a shrill yelling and paddled swiftly toward us, twelve canoe-loads in all, bristling with men and spears. It was a war-party, it was plain, coasting along to ravage weaker tribes and deeming us fair game on which to try their hand. We swarmed up to the deck and dragged two culverins into position while the savages, dividing into half a circle, came on. There were between twenty and thirty men in each canoe against us eight, and the first flight of their arrows darkened the sky to seaward, many falling short but others pricking our deck and sides as an earnest of what they would do at closer range.

We fired the culverins, and the shot spattered close to some of the craft. They swerved but advanced with wonderful speed. Now we could see their fierce faces all daubed with yellow clay, their shining eyes and gleaming teeth as they shook clubs and bows and spears at us, speeding on so fast that they would be beneath the shelter of our bows and swarming up our sides before we could reload and bring the culverins to bear once more.

The odds were heavy, more than thirty to one, attacking desperately from all sides and so undismayed at the thunder of our cannons that it was plain they had braved such discharge before. They seemed drunk with battle or with some strong liquor brewed for the foray, shouting like demons as they closed in.

Now we had labored all the ebb, and the flood was beginning to creep in. Once up, our charges would be wetted and our chance gone for a tide. A line was still hanging overside, and, snatching a linstock, I blew on it and swung over the rail down to the rocks. The canoes were scarce twenty paces away, and arrows rattled on my armored body and steel cap before I could crouch behind the rock. Swiftly I lit the short fuses, one after the other, leaving each sputtering briskly, for the sun had dried them faster than we had counted on.

As I reached for the line, a volley broke from the deck, and I saw, half aswim, half wading to the waist, a dozen savages. Hand over hand I climbed, arrows thudding in the timbers. One Indian leaped for me, stabbing with a spear, and him I kicked in the face as a shaft smacked into my calf. The sharp pain only spurred me, and I reached the rail and so over it with a boot filling with blood and the arrow breaking off short as I dragged my leg across.

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Then there came a roar and a heave; dense clouds of white puffed up, lit by an orange glare. Off my balance I rolled down the slanting deck and smashed head on to the forward anchor-bitts. That was the last I knew until I came to with two faces hanging over me, one black, one tan, the head of Neptune and of Peter. I seemed rocked in a well-swung hammock. I saw a swelling sail and heard the musical creak of ropes, the gentle wash of water. And I discovered a bump upon my aching forehead, big and purple as a plum to my gentle probing, besides a galleyed leg.

We were standing out to sea, passing through a channel in the rocks where the spotted sea-beasts yapped at us, free of the land and the savages, on the bosom of our foster-mother, the ocean, committed to her care, sailors again, bound for the distant home.

OUR caravel—we had named her the *Hope*—was a cranky craft. At her best she had never been much, nor were we skilled as shipwrights or sailmakers. With a following sea and wind she wallowed like a pig in a trough, perpetually fell off, and our botch of a sail could not hold the wind for hauling. But she sailed, after a fashion, and to us it seemed as if she fairly danced over the seas. We had still the herbs for the dressing of Angus' wound—that had long ago healed outwardly—and some of these I used for my leg, taking care to drain the wound properly, and it healed rapidly as I passed most of the hours, daylight and dark, upon the poop.

The wind held fair, blowing steadily from the northwest, and, at such distance from the land as rendered it only a dark line of purple to the east, we made good progress southward toward Panama or to some point above it where me might cross the isthmus to the Mexico Gulf. The caravel would needs be abandoned, but we planned to take nails and spikes from her and, perhaps, the canvas, wherewith to build us some sort of a ship in which to plow the ocean that washed the shores of home. Once on its waves—once on the road to England—it seemed as if we could make the voyage on a raft, and all perils shrank to things to laugh at as we sailed.

Then one morning came a swift change in the weather. The breeze failed us entirely, and we rocked up and down in a succession of choppy seas beneath a sky that slowly changed from blue to gray and so to the color of dingy bronze. The waves themselves lost all luster and spirit, slapping heavily against us, greasy, muddy, while a haze hid all the landfall.

All this time the little caravel complained with creaks and groans of her racked and none too sound timbers. The mast brought up constantly with a jerk against the stays. These latter were our chief apprehension, being far from their full strength by reason of long exposure. Nor was the mast too well stepped. A moaning came off the land as if in the calm the sound of the far-away surf was carried. We furled the idle sail, for I smelled a tempest brewing somewhere. The sun dwindled overhead to a mere speck of yellow, like a spot of melting butter in a copper pan, lacking warmth or power. At last it disappeared and suddenly grew very chill.

Our hollow hull resounded to the boom and thump of the heavy waves that carried no crests, only an angry spittle of thin foam. They ran in every direction so that we pitched head-on to all the compass. When the blast struck us, we were stern to land, whence it came. It caught the rising poop and spatted us about as a cat slaps a defenseless mouse.

A dozen short first puffs, and the wind cracked its cheeks to do its worst to us. In a brief space the sky was a scud of black and gray wrack, the sea a heaving, howling waste of spindrift and we driven over it like a cork in a mill-race. We set a scrap of sail, and the wind got under it and ripped all our cloth from the yard as a thief might snatch a child's kerchief.

We strove to bind some timber together to make a sea-anchor out of, and, as we tossed it over, it came battering back and, slung from a wave top, smashed in the stem just below the bowsprit. Our makeshift rudder splintered; the ballast shifted, and, laying down to starboard, we scudded out to sea, helpless, the *Hope* turned into a disaster.

We knew not day from night in that roaring tempest, that black and gray nightmare of sea and sky where was neither sun nor moon nor stars. But, after long hours of despair, unlightened by any possibility of effort in our own behalf, I saw by the compass that our direction had changed. We seemed to be sweeping on the curving line of a circular storm that had borne us roughly

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westward and now was driving us south and east. Soon we must be flung up against the land. Where, it was idle to speculate; nor did there seem much choice unless the sea abated to give us some last chance to swim ashore through the breakers.

The patching we had made in the stern had lacked proper calking for the want of material and our haste to get away. Now it began to peel off, and the caravel took in water that, held back from the main hull by the bulkhead, caused her to cock her bows up in such fortunate fashion that where we leaked at one end we did not at the other. But, every now and then, as I lay upon the poop, I could see some fragment of planking torn away from the stern to go racing off in the yeasty wash. Slowly but surely we were being torn apart.

Once let the breach be wide enough and the whole afterworks would go.

The sky lightened a little, and the dirty waves began to resume some hint of green. It grew brighter every hour, though the seas did not diminish nor the wind decrease. Off our larboard bow the distant land appeared, too high for the region of Panama, the coast of Popayan, as I gussed it, of Peru. We were being flung upon a shore where our enemies would delight to show us such cruelties that, beside them, Potusi's cannibal methods paled.

Without sail or sweep, sodden and leaking, we swung inshore as powerless as any barnacled log, plunging more and more sullenly as we were slowly waterlogged. To finish our discomfort, the starboard-rigging parted and the mast canted, loosening the deck-planks, threatening every moment to break away from its step and pound a hole through our bottom. Clinging, hungry, weak, like limpets to the poop, we marked with sleepless eyes our progress.

The sky showed patches of blue amid white clouds; the sun peeped through; the waves were indigo, white-feathered. Back of the purple shore, checkered with glints of green, hints of high mountains gleamed, high cliffs appeared with spouting waters at their base, and, though the wind prevented the sound, we could imagine the angry shouting of the surf.

After a while we entered a wide bay close to its northern headland, cast into some strong shore eddy. Able to do naught for ourselves, our fate depended upon the condition of the tide. Was it at flood, we should be thrown up upon rocks or beach, as the luck might hold. If at ebb, we were like to be spun out toward sea again, unless shattered on some reef that offstood the lower cape.

We snatched what moments of comfort we could as the sun grew kinder and warmed us, and made shift to eat something. The caravel had nigh lost all its buoyancy, and the timber held together by some miracle. Nearer and nearer in we floated. The waves lost their malice but not their vigor, and rank after rank shouldered us on toward the shore. The tall cliffs were of red rock, split here and there by ravines that held vegetation, but we could note so sign of life as the afternoon wore on and slowly, inexorably, we were sucked toward the beach.

Slowly, too, but surely, the wind dropped with the sea, and out hopes mounted. There was sand ahead, and we were on a flood tide. With each surge we expected to strike bottom, long before it happened. Then we seemed to cling for a moment with the foam streaming over our waist before we were lifted again and carried on. If all of us had been able to swim, we might have chanced it. Neptune gazed at us impatiently as if wondering why we clung to the heavy-laboring hull.

Yet to swim was to abandon all hope of saving aught but a few clothes and, perhaps, a dagger or so, with which to land upon a shore fraught with dangers. Again we bumped and dragged and yet again. Then the poop sagged under us, and we fled to the streaming waist, praying that the bulkhead would hold. And hold it did, until the waves buffeted us, sidewise, on to a stretch half sand, half grating shingle. Watching our chances, we flung ashore such salvage as was most urgent and followed it, retrieving much of it before the undertow reclaimed it.

We were none too soon. Hardly had we gleaned what we could when a great wave bombarded the broken caravel, rammed in the bulkhead, compressing what air was left within the hull and so sent the deck planks flying. The following breakers ravened over the shattered remnants, tearing the *Hope* to splinters, flinging them mockingly upon the sands hard by where we watched, and then within the hour the tide turned, and by sunset the sea was calm as glass with just a lacy ripple on the marge, while

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we, bearing our meager savings, trudged along beneath the cliffs to the shelter of a wooded gorge whence a tiny stream meandered to the ocean.

We had saved some powder and some bullets. Our swords were with us and our other arms, though these were rusty and sadly needed oil. We had taken the risk of wearing our light armor—that is, the four of us who boasted it. The rest of our raiment was in sad shape, and we were a sorry set of scarecrows, but for the present we were safe.

Doubtless the stream held fish; there was sure to be fruit in the woods, and we had our lives, though the sea had disinherited us once more. We did not risk a fire, for it was warm and the sun had already dried us fairly.

If this was the coast of Popoyan, then we should be in the Bay of Saint Matthew, the town of Tacames would be on the southern cape and not far off must be the mouth of the River Santiago that led up toward the city of Quito, a stronghold of our enemies, once a great holding of the conquered Incas. This much Gilbert and I pieced together from our recollection of the talks aboard the *Golden Hynde* in our northward drive. But for the while we were secure, and, setting watch, the rest of us, exhausted, fell into deep sleep.

CHAPTER XX

THE GOLDEN PRINCESS

MORN found us all refreshed in body and spirit. Though we were in the land of our enemies, yet, on full stomachs, with the bright sun to animate us, we did not despair. Our caravel was gone, but there were other ships. Marching carefully south or north, somewhere we should surely find a port or fishing village, and it should go hard with us, eight stout followers of Drake, if we could not discover and capture some vessel and make shift to run the gantlet north to Panama. So far as the Spaniards knew, Drake had escaped with all his crew, and the craft we should take need never be suspected as aught but going about its own business once we got free of the harborage. Hope is a speedy growth, and we soon persuaded ourselves that we should yet get clear.

We cleaned our weapons as best we could, mounted fresh flints, filled pouches and horns with charges, arranged our slight baggage and set forth along the beach northward. There lay the province of Biruquete. On the way we should surely meet with Indian tribes, and we relied upon the prestige of *El Draque* to win aid for his stranded sailors, for we had seen plainly on our raiding voyage with Drake that the yoke of Spain lay heavy on the Incas and that only an iron rule prevented the outbreak of an ever-smoldering revolt.

Then again, all the main strength of Spain lay to the south. The viceroy reigned at Lima with another heavy garrison at Cuzco. Once clear from Quito, which should be some fifteen leagues inland to my reckoning, we should run small risk of capture until we neared Panama.

If the River Santiago lay to the north of us, as we trusted, there we should be like to find fishermen and, maybe, acquire in some manner a vessel. So we set forth gaily enough for shipwrecked mariners, keeping close under the cliffs and making good progress. Toward the end of the day the cliffs slowly lessened in height, and we saw ahead a great dip in their outline, where doubtless a river found the sea.

Soon we were walking through a grove of stilted trees whose roots hooped above the sand and were fringed with oysters, still moist with the retreating tide. Through this maze we went carefully, Neptune ahead, smelling out the way with nostrils keen for danger. The shell-fish were welcome diet, and we plucked the sea-fruits as we went, opening them with our knives and swallowing the succulent contents with gusto, the dog getting his share.

Gilbert and I marched ahead, the rest straggling after through the strange trees, Reed opening oyster after oyster in the hope of finding a pearl, Angus swinging along with a healthy stride, humming snatches of songs.

To all outward seeming the laird was a well man again, and the lack of his brain faculties seemed to give him more of physical vigor. My own leg bothered me but little; we were all as fit as fresh herrings. Peter with his jests kept Mordaunt, Law and Jonson in good humor, and we swung on through the tangle of arching roots like boys on a sand picnic.

As I turned to see that we were not straggling overmuch, Gilbert pinched my elbow.

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"Look at the dog," he whispered.

I did and held my hand for silence as the others came up and grouped. Neptune was frozen, his tail rigid, one paw advanced in mid air. We listened, and the sound of voices was plain. Immediately ahead the foliage had changed to a dense ranking of low palms. This I parted and saw the wide and shallow mouth of a river with two Indians hauling in a net and, on a sandy bank, their long canoe.

I plucked a fan of the palm-bush and stepped through the screen, holding the green signal of amity in front of me and calling to the men, first in Quichua dialect and then in Spanish. At back Gilbert and the rest stood ready to cover if the Indians showed any signs that they mistrusted us. I knew that many of the native *pichapachacas*, petty officials, pandered to the Spanish rule and would be like to give the alarm if they suspected us of being aught but Spanish, but there seemed little likelihood of this, and our corselets and arms, in sad condition though they were, would inevitably suggest the Spanish soldier. We were long since tanned as dark as any Spaniard by breeze and brine. But neither did we wish it noised abroad at Quito that any soldiery had arrived, lest we be sought for and our motives questioned.

The two Indians seemed suspicious, but I was between them and their canoe, and the elder, whose hair was gray, came ahead, leaving the other to handle the net, wading through the shallows and shading his eyes with his hand as he came. For a peasant he bore himself proudly erect; there was a set to his shoulders that proclaimed martial tendencies and training rather than the long hauling-in of lines. Five paces from me he halted.

"Whence come ye?" he asked in excellent Spanish that astonished me. Though the conquered Incas had absorbed some smattering of the Spanish tongue, they hung as a rule to their own two dialects, save for their chieftains who stood closer to the Dons. Here was a man speaking as good Castilian as I, and he a fisherman, naked, save for a flimsy rag about his loins.

"From the sea," I answered and qualified the reply by adding that we were sailors, not soldiers.

By this time he was peering keenly at me, and suddenly his eyes lit up.

"Ye have blue eyes," he said. "And your comrades—are their eyes also blue? Ye are not Spaniards?"

It was evident that he had no liking for his masters. We were in luck. I told him that we were followers of Drake, giving him some slight account of our present plight and future hopes. Instantly his attitude changed.

"If ye are followers of *El Draque*," he said, "as your eyes indeed proclaim, then are ye friends of mine. For ye hate the Spaniards no less than I do."

His eyes flashed, and he drew himself up, a proud figure for all his nakedness as he stood calf-deep in the tide.

"My name is Sayna," he announced. "I am a *curaca*, a *cacique*, a hereditary chief, descended from the family of Huayana Capac himself. Yet, because Don Francisco de Toledo, viceroy at Lima, fears my influence in the North against his tyrannies, I am stripped of my rank and riches and forced to cast for fish to feed my family, since those who openly aid me will be sent to the mines. But there will shortly be a change. Come, *señores*, we have at least shelter and food to offer."

He came up on to the bank, and we followed him through the palm-scrub up the river, which proved to be the Santiago, until we came to some caves into which we entered. In a large hollow, lit with torches, sat a score or so of Indians dressed in cotton stuffs, many with turbans about their heads. These sprang up in some alarm at our entrance but gathered about us in excitement as our host proclaimed us as Drake's men. Food was set before us with drafts of powerful *chica*, to which Reed, Mordaunt and the sailors promptly applied themselves.

"Ye come at an opportune time," said the *cacique*. "For, know ye, O men of Drake, that the country groans against the taxes and the injustice of the Spaniard. One-half of our men are forced to labor in the mines, though the *mita* law calls for one-seventh only. Tupac Imaru, last of the royal line of the Incas, was beheaded by this Viceroy Toledo in the public square at Cuzco without trial or cause, save that they wished to stamp out our spirit and our race. The Spaniards use us only to ravish our own land. We live and die like dogs. Our treasures they take for themselves; our women they give to their soldiery.

"And they boast that we were born to be

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their slaves, to give up our own gods and to set our necks beneath their feet. But now ye have come who know their crafts of war—before whom they have cringed, for does not the whole land ring with the deeds of *El Draque* and his one small ship? Have we not all laughed behind our hands at the viceroy while he has chewed his beard and sworn foolish oaths. Now that ye have come, Blue-Eyes, it is a sign that the time is ripe for us to strike. So listen."

IT WAS a strange story that he told us; stranger never yet was spun to shipwrecked sailors, and it was no marvel that a mad sort of gaiety seized hold of us as he talked and visions formed about us in that sea-cave where the torches threw flickering lights upon us all, Englishmen of sorts and various degrees, ragged, marooned upon a shore in the midst of their enemies; and a score of Incas, high-browed and aquiline of nose, with eyes that gleamed like black glass, squatting motionless about us as Sayna told of things beyond our ken and promised us treasure by the side of which the loot aboard the *Golden Hyntle* was as a peasant's straw-rick to the queen's granary.

"These Spaniards," said Sayna, "have much wisdom and craft of fighting, yet are they no more brave than we. But their *caballos* (horses) and the black powder of their guns and bombards were strange to us, nor as yet have we found the secret of the powder; so they ever from the first threw us into confusion and conquered. They call themselves white men, yet are their skins nigh as dark as ours, their hair black and their eyes. Not so you, *señores*. The wind and sun have made you brown, yet is your true skin white as marble. Is it not so, *señor*? Will ye not show us?"

Feeling a good deal of a fool, though there was no doubt of the earnestness of the *cacique's* request and of some reason back of it, I exposed my chest, and Gilbert followed my example. Sayna took down a torch and exhibited us as if we had been a strange kind of beast. But his meaning soon came out.

"Long, long ago," he went on, "before the Incas came to this land, there came out of the far sunset seas men whose skins were as white as yours, whose eyes were also blue or gray. They had long beards, and they were very wise and also kind. At Tiahuanaco on the shore of Lake Titicaca, that is south of Cuzco, at Huinaque and at Huaraz here in the North they erected dwellings so vast that, beside them, the mightiest temples of the Incas are as the playhouses of children. Now these great houses crumble slowly, and these white men no longer rule the land. Lost is the story of their fall, yet our very old men hold tales of a great plague that came among them, killing all, save a very few that fled to the high mountains from the sickness of the plains. They did not mate with the Indians who were then in the land, and the race died almost utterly.

"But—and this the Spaniards do not know, for it is but known to the high *caciques* among us—in the high mountains on the eastern side behind Quito, where rise the waters of the River Napo that drains into the River of Amazons, flowing far to the Eastern Sea, there lives the last of all this ancient race. Aymayu, the Golden Princess, with eyes blue as the sky at noon, hair like spun gold, skin as white as the foam of the sea. Mayhap she is of thine own race, *señor;* who knows? Mayhap thou canst understand the words she still holds of the tongue of her fathers, words strange to us. More, she has a metal plate upon which signs are graven and which signs her father told her were as words to those who could interpret, though he had long ago lost their meaning.

"She is the Daughter of the Sun and our high priestess, as her father was our greatest priest before her and his fathers before him. Naught does the Spaniard know of her or the place where she dwells, which is well hidden and well guarded, even against his bombards and his *caballos*. It is about her that we must rally, seeing that now the last of all the Incas has been foully slain.

"For long have we planned a rising. We must strike soon before all our strong men have been crippled in the mines or beneath the burden of our taxes, before the spirit is crushed from us and we begin to breed only weaklings. Our plans are laid for one universal stroke. We have even some of their weapons and their beasts. Only, because we have been so often beaten back, do the people hesitate and grow faint-hearted."

Sayna leaned forward and began to talk with increasing swiftness and eagerness.

"Nine days from now from Quito to Cuzco the heads of our rebellion gather at the palace of Aymayu in a final council.

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Even now they are traveling along the causeways. Come there with us. Join us, and the game is half won already. Let the *caciques* once know—let them send out swift word by the runners bearing the knotted message-thongs that the men of Drake are with us, and we shall drive the Spaniards into the sea!

"Then will we give ye all the treasure ye can carry. All that is now loose in Peru will we give ye. The hills hold plenty more, and what is gold to freedom? We will pack the Spanish ships for ye with gold and silver and jewels and chain the Spanish dogs as slaves to the benches so they may row ye back to your own land. Not as beggars will ye return, but as kings. What say ye?"

I have said that a certain mad gaiety took grip of us. It was a wild tale, but we were used to wild happenings. We might not gainsay it, having seen many wonders. It was possible that a white maid might be living in the mountains and that her forebears had come from lands as far off as our own. Men had gone to sea in cockboats since Noah builded his ark or Moses was cradled on the Nile. Who should say? If she had eyes blue as the sky at noon, hair like spun gold and skin as white as sea-foam, she must be akin to our own race.

I longed to see the metal tablet that Sayna spoke of. I was not drawn to maids, having had scant knowledge of them in my life, but, were she white, we white men could not seemly pass this opportunity of seeing her. And there was the treasure. The thought of Spaniards laboring at the sweeps of galleasses was a tempting one, if not practical. Yet even a small ship could be so packed with jewels as to make us all as rich as Khubla Khan himself.

For nearly fifty years the Spaniards who, when they landed, had, so they boasted, less than two hundred men under Pizarro, had held fast grip upon the Inca race, suppressing risings, taking treasure and levying taxes, enslaving the people. Slavery, in all the history of nations, becomes a habit that is hard to shed. Sayna was right. Gunpowder had done it in the main. Gunpowder and horses. Not better bravery, but better weapons. So is the world ever conquered. Given equal weapons and numbers, the braver wins—or the craftier. Would not gunpowder still prevail?

"How are ye armed?" I asked Sayna.

It was a poor showing in the main against guns and armor. Bows and arrows, lances, darts copper-tipped. Short swords and partizans of copper, slings, casques and shields of wood and tunics of quilted cotton, of no avail against a bullet. They had some two dozen arquebuses, six horses, two kegs of powder. I showed my doubts, but Sayna did not share them.

"We shall fall upon them at night," he said. "We shall kill them in the open by surprize and starve out their forts. The plans are well laid. With ye for leaders the spirit will come back to our people. Look—our copper is mixed with white metal, it is as hard as your sword-blades and carries as keen an edge. We know how to combat their bombards now, to draw their fire and charge between the loadings. Look ye—ants can kill a man, though he slay myriads. We have men to spare. We die now from taxes and labor in the mines and fields, from lack of food, from the rape of our women. We are doomed as a race. Shall we die lying down?"

He fired us afresh. Remember, save Mordaunt, the old boatswain, Angus' head was the only old one among us and that in no condition to advise. Reed was half drunk. Such of the tale as Peter had been able to follow and translate to Mordaunt and the two sailors meant to them only fighting Spaniards, whom they despised, and much loot for carousal. Peter himself was keen to the value of treasure; Gilbert and I looked at each other with our blood tingling for the gay adventure. We risked little, for our lives were risked daily.

"When do we start for the mountains?" I asked.

"Aye," hiccoughed Reed. "To see the peerless Golden Princess with the blue eyes and the white skin! Does she approve of these plans? An she does, I would wish to make her acquaintance and discuss the matter of fitting reward. For, look ye, there should be a prince for every princess, and a man might do worse than stay in such a ——"

I shut him off, bidding him let Sayna speak. The *cacique* and his comrades, also *curacas* of high rank, were frankly delighted at our apparent inclination.

"We start tonight," said Sayna. "It is best we should arrive before the others and prepare Aymayu, and it takes many days of travel. We must avoid Quito carefully.

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Once in the mountains, we trail by hidden ways that no Spaniard can follow. Now get ye what rest ye can till midnight."

WE WERE aroused to find in the inner chamber Sayna and his friends, clad now in different attire. Their heads were fresh turbaned and their kilted robes of a material soft as silk, of rich hues and beautifully embroidered in rare colors. Chains and collars of gold were about their necks, bracelets on their arms, sparkling with diamonds and emeralds and rubies, golden girdles, of links that made them pliable as leather, held swords and daggers; their mien was that of chiefs set upon a high venture.

We with our patched clothes, faded and threadbare, our worn boots, our rusty armings, looked a sorry lot beside them. But Sayna placed about my neck a finely wrought collar in which flamed a green stone big as my thumb nail, and gifts were distributed to the rest of us as an earnest of what might follow. These symbols of their rank had been hidden from the rapacious tax-gatherers, and Aymayu's palace was also filled with rare treasures, Sayna told us.

In return we gave them some knives and a spare pistol or so, with an arquebus for Sayna, and it was very evident that these things held far more value for them than the gold. But I made up my mind to secure some of the fine cloth that was woven from the skins of a beast called vicugna and to get skins for new boots at the first opportunity.

We set out in the dark, paddling up the river for a ways, then discarding our canoes and striking to the lands south of Quito, making for the foot-hills. At dawn we crossed the stone-faced causeway that ran, much like a Roman Road in Britain, from Quito in the north to Cuzco in the south, three hundred leagues of paving, galleried at times through the living rock, spanning gorges, a marvel of engineering, well drained, the stones cemented with pitch, a monumental work.

Surely, it seemed, such a people of builders who could conquer these obstacles must come into their own again if their ambitions were centered in a common bond. And we, men of British breed, eight of us, marching like pigmies into the high mountains with a score of Incan *caciques* to meet a blue-eyed maid, were, in the magic of Drake's name, to be the leaven of this scheme of reconquest.

Day after day we marched, climbing ever, leaving behind cultivated plateaus where maize and cane and cotton waved luxuriantly, tilled by Incan slaves, up into dense woods where the trees were cloaked in vermilion, in yellow and purple with scented bloom; where parrots screamed and tiny jeweled birds shot like bullets; where butterflies bigger than our opened palms sailed in painted gaudiness and monkeys chattered as they swung from ropy vines starred with strange-petaled flowers.

Up higher, where the trees sent out downward branches that took root again until the growth covered more space than a church—trees where great dormant snakes lay coiled, sluggish from their last meal, whose inky foliage was so dense that no sun ever entered and foul fungus mushroomed underfoot and on the trunks, pulps of scarlet and purple that stank when they were knocked off by our passing.

Up by wild gorges that we crossed on pendulous bridges formed of cables of intertwined vines passing through holes bored in great rocks and anchored by great bulks of timber. Up through passes where the wind blew cold from the snow fields close above us and the thunders growled continually, while the lightnings seemed to charge the air with a strange fluid that made our hair prick and snap and Neptune's curly hide to throw off sparks at the touch.

So across the range, descending by ways that to our eyes showed no trail, down to a wild glen where, set against a cliff that closed it at one end, we saw to our amaze a fortress built of great blocks of stone, a square hall with a domed roof and beside it a tall round tower, all blind, save for openings high-placed and grilled with metal.

This was the palace of Aymayu, tucked away in this savage glen, looking as if it were carved out of the solid mountain. A great place for a siege, I thought, providing it could hold food and water. I noted water-stains about the wall bases, and Sayna pointed to where, high above the palace, was a reservoir among the peaks where a dam had been built below a snow-fed cataract. Aqueducts led from it to the glen. These waterways were closed by gates of bronze that could be raised at will by levers from within the fort.

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There were no signs of welcome, none of life at first, though presently I discerned a lazy streak or two of smoke that crept up the gray face of the cliff. But, as Sayna explained, we were two days ahead of time and unexpected.

We halted at the mouth of the glen in a natural gateway, scarce twelve feet in width, between towering walls of granite. To one side grinned a stone idol, squatted on a pedestal that was so carven it was naught but bosses and deep interstices about which snaky monsters twined, the wriggling bodies meeting in a common mouth, gaping with fangs that clasped a globe carved like a pomegranate or some native fruit.

To this Sayna set his fingers and removed it, leaving a round orifice to which he applied his mouth. I could see his brown cheeks swell with wind, and then all the little valley was filled with a mighty moan that swelled and swelled until it beat against our ear-drums and then died down, to be repeated.

We waited in silence, Neptune flattened on the ground, awed, as the rest of us, by that weird sound. Then from the palace-fort there came a high note of such clean, shrill sweetness that it seemed to draw the soul out to meet it, the call of a golden trumpet. A little procession in gay, gleaming robes came out from behind the main building and started down the glen as we got under motion to meet it.

Their finely woven garments were dyed in rainbow shades that glistened with every movement, girdled with belts in which jewels shot forth colored fires. Fillets of yellow, fringed, were about their foreheads, and from these upstood feathers. Sandals of leather were on their feet, and some, less gaily clad, held canopies of feathers of metallic lusters over the heads of the rest. Eighteen men in all led the carriers of a litter hung with silken curtains prodigiously emblazoned in gold and jewels. In a little grassy glade there stood a great block of stone, and there they halted until we came up, the litter being set upon the rock.

As we came close, Sayna and his fellow *caciques* flung themselves upon hands and knees and crawled slowly forward toward the litter, while we stood upright, stiff-necked against bending to any savage monarch or priestess.

The silken curtains rippled, parted, and now the attendants also fell upon their faces as Aymayu stepped out. For my part, I was taken all aback. I know not what I had expected, but the word priestess had at least unprepared me for what I did see. I had fancied a woman fully grown, matured, and here was a young maid, a girl, midway in her teens at most, looking at us with eyes the color of the forget-me-nots that grow by English brooks, eyes that seemed to hold a cloudy storm of anger at our presence and then to clear to curiosity, to wistfulness, to puzzlement.

SLIM she was and most exquisitely proportioned. The whiteness of her skin was that of satin, of milk, of flower petals, of sea-foam, a soft radiance enhanced by the garb she wore, a short shift of the finest weave all shot with changing colors, that was bound just beneath her firm young breasts. Over this hung from her hips a skirt of strings of golden beads. Above each ankle was a golden snake, jewel-eyed. Others curved about her arms from elbow to wrist; fine-linked necklaces of varying sized circlets covered throat and bosom, so bossed with gems that every breath threw off a spray of fire. Emeralds, strung close, confined her hair above her tiny ears, hair of reddish gold, alive, tumbling vibrant far down her back to the hollows of her knees. Gorgeous, imperial in her splendor, yet withal a frail maid who gazed at us in wide-eyed wonder.

All this I took in at this first meeting, for I stared until I was ashamed at this lily-golden maid, stared till I felt the hot blood rush to my brows and, as if in reflection, the pinkness of a sea-shell tinged her oval face and flower neck. We all stood there like boors, save Angus, who, for all his feeble brain, retained the courtesy of a knight and doffed his casque.

I did not notice this at first. I heard Gilbert, beside me, gasp and Reed draw in his breath sharply. Then, angry with myself, I uncapped. Gilbert followed suit, bowing with a courtliness I could not hope to follow. I turned upon Mordaunt and the rest and saw him and the sailors with their mouths agape. Reed stood with a hand upon one hip, his eyes insolent in appraisement. A sudden black rage at the man swept over me, and I doubt not that I should have struck him had not the maiden spoken in soft Quichuan.

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"Their eyes, Sayna! They are blue, like mine! And their hair and beards! The tall one has hair that matches mine."

I was the tall one. My hair no more matched Aymayu's than the mane of a lion resembles spun silk. It was all about my shoulders in a tangle of coarse yellow. So with my untrimmed beard. But my eyes were blue enough—as were Gilbert's, for that matter, and those of Angus. Reed's were dark as a Spaniard's. Mordaunt's sea-gray and Law's the same, with Jonson's a paler tint. Peter's ranged to green beneath his shock of carroty hair. I suppose our tanned skins set them strangely off.

"Who are these strangers, Sayna?" Aymayu asked in a soft, almost childish voice. "Why dost thou bring them here before the time?"

Their talk ran so fast in their dialect that I could but catch a word here and there. But I heard mention of *El Draque* and saw again her eyes turn on us with a new expression. At last Sayna ceased, and she turned to us with the one word—

"Welcome."

She stood up and smiled at all of us with a flash of pearly teeth from between scarlet lips and disappeared between the curtains of her litter.

The procession reformed, and we followed it with Sayna and his band. The litter passed behind the main square building and up some steps at the head of which bronze gates, molded with serpents and staring heads, opened. We, with the *caciques*, turned to the left below a low arch and so up a steep stairway to a spacious hall hung with many tapestries in which gleamed gold and silver threads. Rushes were on the floor; window openings let in the light, close beneath a dome rough-plastered in deep red.

A low, long table of dark wood stood in the center, and, as we gathered, Indians, clad in kilts of yellow cloth, came in swiftly and silently, bearing on plates of gold and silver such a bewilderment of fruits that one knew not which first to test. Meats followed, whole kids cooked with herbs and drafts of *chica* poured from golden ewers into golden cups. It seemed enchantment, save for the relish we found for the savory food, carving the joints with our daggers as we squatted on the rushes beside the low table.

Sayna told us, after we had broken our appetites, that Aymayu would presently receive us and accounted for the rich dishes by saying that in this place was stored all the most precious of the things saved from Pizarro's loot. Soon, he announced with pride, we should see the temple. Meanwhile we were to rest and sleep and after that to swim in a great tank of mountain waters and renew our garments from robes that would be provided, did we deign to accept them.

All this we did, marveling, as if in a dream. The tank was in a garden planted in a niche of the mountain-wall, set with sweet-scented shrubs and a bewilderment of flowers. Great butterflies floated over us as we splashed about like so many boys in the invigorating water and came out at last to replace our torn, soiled hose and jerkins with short mantles and kilts, our arms above them looking strange enough to ourselves but vastly comforted.

We went in through yet another door into the antehall of the temple. I had prepared for magnificence, but naught that my mind could conjure up could have imagined such a scene. Over against the western wall was a flat carving of the Sun-god—or, rather, of his face—from which outran rays of gold so powdered with precious stones that the eyes could scarce bear to follow the design.

The walls, the ceiling, were covered with golden plates and studs. Great vases and ewers stood about, and there were flowers imitated in the precious metal with astonishing fidelity, among them maize, the golden ear showing amid broad leaves of silver, the light tassel floating atop. These stood in niches in the golden walls, together with animals wrought in the yellow metal, and other ornaments. Not all the wildest tales of travelers had ever surpassed such richness and beauty; the air seemed golden; we seemed to draw gold down into our very lungs.

"These were brought away from the Great Temple of the Sun when the Spaniards would have taken all we had," said Sayna. "These things are sacred, but below there is great store of jewels and ornaments that will be thine."

"This beats picking nuggets from a river bed," said Reed. "Strip this place and take the trappings off the girl, and we might make out to call ourselves rich men. I would that Abrahams, the Jew at Aldgate, could see this. It would split his greedy

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heart with longing. Where is Aymayu?" he asked Sayna in Spanish.

"She will receive you in her own garden."

SAYNA led the way but suggested that Peter, with Mordaunt and the two sailors, remain in a little arbor, and there we also left with them Neptune while we walked down a pathway of solid silver blocks to where a golden fountain played in a basin of silver, the whole carven in intricate design. In two half-circles were low, broad settles, also deeply chiseled—or molded, I knew not which; for, prodigal as it may seem, the seats were of the pure metal, so soft that the design was worn smooth in certain places through rubbing from those who reposed thereon.

Reed dug the edge of his dagger into the gold, whistling softly as he did so. But he was not thinking mostly of gold just then. I had marked him ever since he first laid eyes on Aymayu, and I read the signs. I was neither prude nor fool, and I marked the swollen veins and bloodshot eyes of the swashbuckler aright before he mouthed his desires.

"It is a shame we have no dice," he said as he lolled on the bench, awaiting the maid. "Seeing there are three of us and but one of her and she too sweet a morsel for any man's sharing."

"I do not catch thy meaning," said Gilbert gently but with the scar in his cheek beginning to show scarlet.

Reed laughed coarsely.

"No? Art thou monk, also? Why, then, I'll tell thee. After these months of curbing my manhood, this fair-fleshed maid seems to me most desirable. There are three of us, I say. Let us then draw lots that two may stand aside and the lucky third be free to win her favors."

"Thou art an evil-minded dog," said Gilbert softly. "I will not dip too deep into the slime of thy talk, but I warn thee, if thou dost aught to displease this lady who hast received us so graciously, I will spit thee as a cook skewers a joint for the roasting. And so may hell receive thee!"

"There will be two to play at that game," said Reed.

"Three, mayhap," I put in hotly.

"I will entertain all comers," answered Reed. "It will be a better way than casting lots, for so I shall surely win. And who art thou to say I shall displease the lady? I am as proper a man as either of thee, though I have no hair of gold," he sneered. "Aye, Trevennion, I caught the lady's remark; I know the words for gold and love in all languages."

"And wine," capped Gilbert. "Here she comes. I have warned thee."

Aymayu emerged from a wing of the building. Now she was clad more demurely in a long garment of rose-colored vicugna silk, girdled to her slender waist with a golden snake and bound about her breasts with golden braid. An Indian lad held above her head a canopy of feathers that glowed like jewels. With her walked Sayna, as interpreter.

We rose, and I burned as I noted Reed's lecherous glance, devouring every step she took. Maids, I say, were naught to me, who never knew one outside of my mother's household, but no woman, vile or pure, should have been surveyed as Simon Reed overlooked Aymayu. But she did not seem to notice it, returning our obeisance, placing herself upon the curving settle opposite and motioning to us to take our seats again. Also she ordered the fountain stopped that we might speak the better. Then she spoke to Sayna, and he, with some hesitance, translated.

"Aymayu says that she will be pleased to talk a while with ye three." He bowed to Angus, Gilbert and myself. "But this man," he turned to Reed with a troubled face, "she will have none of. Let him retire."

"*Porque?*" blustered Reed, rising, his face crimson.

Aymayu answered languidly, and I was able to follow her Quichuan.

"I do not like the way he gazed at me. He is a low dog. Tell him, if he so much as looks at me again, he shall be killed."

I could see and understand Sayna's quandary. To kill Reed, even if the deed were done easily, was to deprive his cause of one stout leader. For policy, as we had hitherto avoided open rupture with Reed, Sayna would gladly have changed the mood of his mistress. But Reed demanded an answer to his "Why?" that he could understand.

I was sick of the man. With Gilbert, I would welcome the rupture that sooner or later must come. But, before I could speak, Aymayu clapped her hands, and a lad brought in golden goblets of amber liquor

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that were set within bowls packed with snow. To each of us one was served; including Reed, who forgot his anger at the sight of wine. We drank. The cool draft was wonderfully refreshing, and I stared with astonishment at the sudden sight of Reed asprawl on the paving, his limbs twitching like a spiked frog, his face twisted in an agony that swiftly came and swiftly passed to a gray stillness. I stooped to him as Aymayu spoke.

"He is dead. By his own deed. He looked at me, a Virgin of the Sun, with treacherous lust. I am a maid, yet can I read the mind of a brute. I was merciful. He would have done worse than kill me. Or willed to do it. Take him away."

But Sayna was by her, pleading in Quichuan too swift for me to trail. I could guess his argument. The fear of our withdrawal from the cause—the sufficient punishment of this demonstration of her power—the need of all our aid—all poured forth in rapid insistence to this maid who, for all her tender looks, had been nurtured in a school where the death of a man was no more than the crushing of a noxious insect.

I checked the forward start of Peter and the rest from their arbor, and, while Angus wiped away some froth that had gathered on Reed's lips and strove to close the glazing eyes, Gilbert and I stood straight, sharing the same thought, a relief that Simon Reed was, by no act of ours, removed. I felt no compunction, that I know. I had always believed that sooner or later I would kill the man. Now I was saved the trouble, and he had only got his deserts.

Two yellow-kilted Indians had come out to pick up the body, and, as they lifted him, Sayna got some response to his plea. Aymayu merely nodded, but his face lit up, and he gave directions to the bearers.

"He shall be given the offset for the poison," he said to us. "He will suffer, but he will be as well as ever by tomorrow."

Sayna seemed astonished that we had shown no outbreak at this summary punishment of our mate, but he made no allusion to the matter. As for Aymayu, she appeared serenely unconscious of aught but the fact that her purity had been soiled by the leers of Reed and that, as an affronted goddess, she had rightly punished.

Angus alone taking no part but watching the flowers all about us and the great butterflies hovering above, we discussed the plans for the uprising. Runners were to be sent out with the *quipus*, the cords so knotted as to convey messages announcing our entrance into the rebellion and setting the date that should be decided upon when the other *caciques* arrived.

Most of our army was to come from the mines where the flower of Incan manhood was at labor. These were to rise and slay their overseers, securing their arms and make all speed toward the lower lands, where, at Lima, at Cuzco, at Quito and Truxillo and Arequipa, attempts would be made to surprize the garrisons or coop them up within the fortresses for a starvation siege. We would assist in subduing Quito and then swing south, so giving to each main division of Incans, as circumstance might arrange, certain of our own party, that all might serve under one or more of the men of *El Draque*.

This would, of course, include Reed, but Aymayu made no objection, not seeming to concern herself in the least about him, save where her own person was involved. I saw clearly that the scheme for a revolt lacked all military detail; it was rather to be an attack of separate mobs who would, after their first successes were obtained, endeavor to mold themselves into an army. Nor could this well be avoided, with so many of them virtual prisoners in the mines or tilling the fields under the eye and lash of overseers.

They had neither chance nor time for drill; the *caciques* had managed to hide arms of sorts where they could be hastily unearthed and wielded; the rest must be left to the tribal valor and spirit. Surprize counted for much, but the spirit must be used, Sayna insisted, at its flood tide, lest it ebb and fail to rise again.

Then the talk fell to eager questions from Aymayu as to our own land, its customs and clothes and whether the women were like unto herself. My description of the virgin-queen, Elizabeth, held her, as seeming to show some similarity to her own position. This last, I thought, she did not hold too heavily. She had been born to the office rather than achieved it because of special fitness or desire.

She was the daughter of the Sun and the High Priestess of the Incas but, in her mountain fastness, had little to do with ceremonies that were practised only in secret and by the few. That her powers

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and privileges were warped by these Spaniards was the most she held against them; she shared little of the burning hate of Sayna and his *caciques*.

"Sayna," she said, "tells me I am of another race, perhaps of yours? I will show you the metal plate he spoke of, and there are words I use that Sayna says are strange to him, though I know not which until he tells me, for they are but few."

As my knowledge of Quichuan was limited to a list of some five hundred words, I could not distinguish any such foreign additions, but I waited eagerly the bringing of the metal plate with the inscription. Aymayu seemed so utterly alien, so daintyfair, beside this dusky race that worshiped her, that I felt there must be some link to chain her to the Old World, to prove her kindred with our own peoples.

She seemed many things at once, a woman and a girl, cruel and helpless, innocent and wise, and, it had to be admitted, altogether charming. Gilbert, shy of Spanish, destitute of Indian dialect, sat mute, devouring her with is eyes, though in no such wise as Reed, now writhing in the nausea of the antidote inside the palace, had done. He made no secret of his interest, and, for her part, Aymayu sent certain flashes of blue lightning in his direction as proved her, Incan or Saxon, an arrant flirt. Even Angus fell under her spell when she smiled at him as if in understanding of his condition. She suggested through Sayna that he might be cured. "For," said she, "he is too mild-natured to be a warrior." But I had no mind to trust him to any crude, savage surgery and assured Sayna that Angus, sword in hand, was far from mild, remembering the flight from Ah-wah-nee.

THE tablet came, wrapped in fine cloths, a leaf of gold some two hands square, on which had been graved or stamped characters that were barely to be deciphered, to my disappointment; for I had hoped to learn something of her origin, and it was plain that Aymayu hung upon my wisdom. Eve-like, she was eager for all knowledge, and this secret was that of her birth.

It was plain that, through some intuition or her father's teaching or from the great differences of physical appearance, she had esteemed herself as something apart from the Incans who revered her as the priestess of their religion. She was too human to consider herself a goddess, and now here were men with eyes of her own color, fair-haired and fair-skinned.

Perhaps a long-suppressed loneliness welled up in her, something hardly sensed hitherto. She was an orphan in a strange land. This might have come suddenly home to her with a cry for her own kinsmen to recognize her, if we were kinsmen. Save for her barbaric tongue, she might well have been an English maid playing in a masque.

I know not what I had expected, but in these faint marks I could read nothing. The tablet might have been one of many, a leaf from the record of the bearded white men who had come from the seas beyond the sunset. There seemed some slight resemblance to Greek characters. They might have been Hebrew; all was so blurred with the wear of time and the constant polishing to which the gold had seemingly been subjected. I turned it over and about while she watched with her soul in her eyes, as I saw when I handed it back to her again, shaking my head.

"Can ye make naught of it?" asked Sayna.

I told him of the resemblance to Greek lettering, and then naught would do but I must tell all that I knew of the Greeks. Aymayu fairly hurled the questions at Sayna and he them on to me.

"Were they fair? How close was their land to mine? Were they brave? What did they wear? Were their women beautiful?" A myriad things that I made shift to answer as best I could.

At last, having sucked me dry of what juice of knowledge I could yield, she discarded me as she might a pulped fruit and turned to Gilbert, choosing to learn from him, through Sayna, English words for her own, clapping her hands and laughing, tossing petals of flowers at Gilbert when he could not handle the Quichuan twist of tongue, for all the world like a white kitten at play.

I was out of it and Gilbert decidedly in, to his own manifest delight. So, taking Angus with me, I left them and went to see Reed, the wickedness vomited out of him for the time, limp as a wet cloth, vowing that Aymayu was a witch. He got small sympathy from me, though I hammered home to him the fact that it was by the clemency of Aymayu he was now living

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again and not from any special pleading upon my part.

He looked at me sourly but wrought up a sick grin at the end.

"There are worse things a woman can do to ye than poison," he said. "There be two kinds of men, Trevennion, those who master women and those to whom woman is the mistress. Thou art of the latter kind, Master Golden-Head. I wish thee joy of her."

A fit of nausea racked him, and we went away.

Magnificent quarters, albeit somewhat gloomy for the lack of sun and daylight, were assigned to us, and thither I repaired with Peter and the rest. Not until torches had been brought and we had supped did Gilbert come back, shy as to his talk with Aymayu and wearing a bracelet massed with red and green gems. She had given me no such favor, I thought, though not with envy. Sayna came with him to see that we were well provided. Reed was in a sleep that would end his cure.

"Tomorrow at dawn," said Sayna, "the *caciques* will arrive. By nightfall the runners shall go out setting the day, and, ere seven suns have set, the people will have risen. Before the new moon is at the full, the land shall belong to the Incas once again and the Spaniards be driven to the sea or sacrificed upon our altars, where their blood shall wipe out the shame of our slavery. Tonight Aymayu shall kindle the sacred flame and read the omens in the vitals of a llama, knead the cake of maize and offer the bowl of maguey to the god. Tomorrow his light shall blaze upon his image and shine upon our council."

For the first time I saw the raw savagery that underlay the dignity of the Incan chief. That there was much to repay for Spanish cruelty I doubted not, but I could see in his blazing eyes, as he spoke of blood upon his altars, that the Spaniards killed in battle would be fortunate. That was none of my affair, save to kill as many Dons as possible. It was hard to get rid of the *cacique*, but, if we were to have clear heads for the council, sleep was necessary, and so I convinced him at last.

The fortress-palace faced the east. I awoke suddenly and saw upon the inner wall of our great chamber a gray square of light that slowly turned to rose. Then in a shuddering moan came the sound from the hollow stone at the gateway to the glen.

We rose and dressed with some special care for the coming council. Reed came sulkily in with the Indians who brought us fruit and meats for breakfast, with a steaming concoction of dark liquor, fragrant and warming, that they called cacao. We were still hard at it when the hangings over the entrance were swept and Sayna entered, his face haggard.

"To your arms!" he said. "We are betrayed! The Spaniards are upon us!"

CHAPTER XXI

TO ARMS!

IT DID not take long for Sayna to tell his bad news. Nor was it hard to understand how the betrayal had been made. The Incans had been slaves for fifty years. There are ever among such, certain poor wretches with broken spirits, eager to curry favor with their masters, fearing the successful issue of a revolt. If it had been possible for the news to be spread that the men of Drake were to lead them, it would have been different, claimed Sayna, but I doubt it. He was snatching at straws that had passed him.

I could see where the Spaniards had won their battles. The Incans were superstitious. A favorable omen from their gods would hearten them, but let them be unfavorable and their own courage leaked away from them in the belief that the gods of the enemy were more powerful than theirs, the more so that these enemies were supplied with mighty weapons.

It seemed the auguries had gone unfavorably with Aymayu. The liver of the llama-sheep had been spotted, and the blood had clotted. Some clumsiness on the part of an attendant had upset the bowl of maguey on the altar. The sacred flame itself had burned only dimly, and Sayna and his mates were half-beaten before the messenger of bad tidings arrived at the glen.

He had barely escaped from capture. Thousands of Incans had been slaughtered at the mines and in the fields; the hidden arms had been confiscated; the names of the leaders dragged out by torture, and, worst of all, this lone *cacique* was hard pursued by Spanish on foot and on horse. They were close on his trail, guided doubtless by some unfortunate who had succumbed to the

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pleasantries of torture at which the Dons were adept through long practise.

Aymayu was not to be seen. She had broken down at the disaster to her rites, Sayna said, as we gathered on a rock terrace in front of the place. As he spoke, the thin note of a trumpet sounded down the defile. The Dons were not loath to announce their coming. It was a trick to terrorize the little body of Incans cooped up in the glen.

"I suppose they are after Aymayu," I said, questioning the late arrival.

He nodded.

"They will burn her and all of us alive," said Sayna.

"First catch your hare," I answered. "'Tis a good day for a fight and a good ground. I see no speedy prospect of a roasting. Six men can keep that entrance. Ye forget that we also have muskets. They will have brought no bombards over this road."

"We can not fight forever," he said. "They will be in force. Yet would I gladly die fighting, but for Aymayu."

I glanced at Gilbert, and he nodded back. It was not a pleasant thought to put in words, but we understood each other. The maid should not fall alive into the Spaniards' hands. As it turned out, we need not have feared that. Aymayu was not the sort to submit to ravishment while she carried a knife.

"What of that reservoir thou spokest of?" I asked Sayna. "Why not let the water in and flood the glen. We may not be able to sweep the Spaniards into the sea, but we can give them a swim in fresh water."

He shook his head.

"We are at work upon the gates," he said. "They have been long unused and the levers will not act. The gates have the weight of the water behind them and will not budge."

"In that case we must do the best we can at the entrance to the glen," I answered. "Peter here will take powder and help you blast away the water-gates if the levers may not be shifted. Meantime, until the powder and bullets give out, the rest of us will hold them."

We left Peter and Law with Sayna and sallied forth, taking with us all we had of munitions, little enough in fact. Sixteen of the *caciques* came with us, armed with swords and long copper-headed spears to withstand any furious charge of horse. The rest stayed with Sayna to unleash the water.

It was going to be a lively onset, and I rejoiced as I looked at my comrades, each with the battle light in his eyes. Reed had his grievous faults, but he was a fighting man first and last. Angus and Gilbert were both humming as we went along. Mordaunt was chuckling to himself, and so was Jonson. Good men all. The *caciques* had found their courage that had been shaken by the bad omens; they would give a good account of themselves.

The glen was steep-walled; there was no way to flank us. It would be a goodly fray with but one flaw in our plan, which I did not mention aloud. When the levers loosened or the mine under the water-gates was set, we must of necessity retreat to the fort in open order for three-quarters of a mile with the Spaniards after us full pelt in order to lead them into the trap, unless we could drive them off in utter defeat or devise some way to trick them.

But that was well forward and could not be helped. The trumpet sounded nearer, and we hurried. I sent Mordaunt, who could climb almost as well as a fly, to ascend a steep pitch of the cliff and see if he could sight the enemy. He went at it like an ape, barefooted, clutching at shrub and crevice while we piled hastily what rocks we could handle in a barricade across the twelve feet of the gap. It was no time for ceremony, and I levered over the moaning god and its pedestal with the rest.

Mordaunt hailed us.

"A troop of twenty, Master Trevennion. A company of harquebusiers and many footmen with pikes."

His voice was as cheerful as if he had been announcing a fine catch of fishes. Then he scrambled down and joined us.

"If we had some spare boulders," he said, "we could knock them off the path. The horses are winded by the light air."

"The last news is the best," I told him. "We need our rocks, and 'ifs' will not do for bullets."

I turned to the *caciques*.

"If they set their horses at the barrier," I warned, "receive them on your spears with butts to the ground. If this fails, cut the strings of their hams. They must not win through."

Now we could hear the clatter of the iron shoes upon the rocky path. A gonfalon of scarlet and yellow appeared among the leaves, and the leaders breasted the rise.

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We were hidden, but they must have seen the barrier. Yet they came on carelessly. Mordaunt spat upon the ground and slapped the butt of his musket. Reed rubbed his palm in the sand for a better grip on his belt. Each of us did those little tricks we go through in the face of fighting danger.

It seemed an overlarge force against us, but the capture of Aymayu would be deemed a most important one, and doubtless the governor of Quito province had been given his orders from the viceroy to that effect. With her in Spanish hands, the last smoldering spark of revolt would be effectually extinguished. The harquebusiers remained in the rear while the horsemen *caracoled* up to the barrier, expecting at the most some scattering arrows, against which they were well armored.

We could hear them talking among themselves, laughing, as we kept down behind our boulders, and I passed the word. But, instead of the pitiful defiance they expected, up rose the six of us, bronzed and bearded, corseleted and casqued, even as themselves, muskets poised, back of us a bristle of spears, and then we shouted:

"A Drake! A Drake!"

And we let loose at them, aiming at the faces of the riders beneath their casques or at the heads of their horses. Then they were on us in some confusion, plainly caused by that unexpected cry that brought up visions of many a hard-learned lesson. Four men fell at the discharge, shot through cheek or jaw. Two horses toppled with their riders, and the troop fell back the while we shouted at them, "A Drake! A Drake!" coupling it with a real British huzza while we reloaded so there should be no mistake as to whom they were fighting.

I had held some doubts as to whether they had learned of our landing in the little bay and our junction with Sayna, but it was plain that they had not. There was a startled cry of "*El Draque!*" among them, a shrinking of their eagerness, a shouting from the leaders and then a spattering volley from the harquebusiers that did us no damage, we being well out of the angle of their fire.

Ours we reserved for the next charge. A trumpet blared; the footmen fell back below the brow of the hill, and the horsemen trotted back a little ways, reforming for the rush. The trail could take but two abreast, though it widened out in the immediate front of the entrance.

We could see harquebusiers climbing the hillside to where they could fire over the horsemen's heads and cover the charge or, as was more likely, be ready to receive ours, for they could not tell how few or many of Drake's men were in the glen, and it was Drake's way to carry the fight to his foes. For us six it would have been folly.

ON THEY CAME, at the trot, then at the gallop, the riders leaning far forward on the necks of their steeds, spurring them to the leap, their swords flashing. The gap was narrow. But three could come at once. We fired as the first rank rose to the jump. Then it was cut and thrust, slash and parry, the wild firing of pistols on the snap, shouts of men, neighs and shrieks of horses, uprearing and down-lunging hooves, smell of blood and horse-sweat, inextricable confusion for perhaps the space of two hundred mad heart-beats.

One gray brute came crashing down, a bullet in its brain, and Angus pulled its master from the saddle and coldly slit his throat with a dagger. This I saw as I snatched a pike from an Incan, having no chance to draw my own sword, and plunged it in the belly of a horse as it hurdled over me and the hot entrails gushed out. A Don, magnificently mounted on a black stallion, fairly cleared the barrier, men, rocks and fallen horses. I saw Gilbert swipe at its hand with his sword and miss.

Then horse and rider landed in the hedge of Incan spears, the stallion striking out and biting furiously while the *caciques* dragged down the Spaniard, albeit he laid about him valiantly, and thrust and carved him into a bloody mass, while the stallion, unhurt, save for one wound in its flank where the red blood streaked, broke free and went thundering up the glen.

I was in a furious grapple with a black-bearded Don, my right leg pinned under the bay that I had ripped, one hand at my man's throat, the other lunging with my dagger against his, when I heard a clear shout of

"Down, dogs, down! A Drake! A Drake!"

I sent my dagger home under the armpit and wriggled free to see Angus, the old Angus, his eyes flashing, his sword gleaming, rallying us with the old battle-cry.

The lust of battle, the swift rush of blood

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that answered to our first call of "A Drake! A Drake!" had cleared his brain of some persistent clot. He was his own man again, the master-at-arms, cool-minded, deadly in his craft. We all took up his call, and the *caciques* came up on the rush, their spears in rest, thrusting at the turmoil of horses that hesitated to take the leap the gallant stallion had achieved.

My own sword out at last, I slashed and thrust with the rest at the fetlocks, the hams, the bellies of the maddened steeds, heedless of blows that fell upon casque and corselet, crouching, safe crab-shelled in my armor, intent upon disabling as many horses as we could, while the Incans flung themselves upon the riders as they came crashing down, hacking, hauling, choking, breaking limbs.

When the remnant wheeled at last, jostling each other, and went flying back under cover of the harquebusiers' fire, we squatted panting back of the rocks and carcasses and hurried to load, firing a volley into the disheartened troop and reloading. Nine horses and eleven men had heightened our barricade and filled the entrance with a *frise* of upflung legs and arms. The corpses of the men we dragged over to us and stripped them of their armor in the respite, Mordaunt, Jonson and nine of the *caciques* donning the corselets and casques and possessing themselves of swords and daggers.

Then, while the Spaniards wavered, we counted our own dead and wounded. Five Incans had passed, one with his chest crushed in by the black stallion. Not one of us but had some cut or bruise from hoof or sword, but we had stopped them.

I glanced back anxiously to where the black was galloping far up the glen. There was no sign of Sayna. The levers were still stubborn, and I knew it would be hard properly to place a powder charge amid stonework. We must hold out. I caught Angus' glance, and he reached out a hand to grip mine.

"My brain has been in a mull, lad, for many a day. I have been living in a mist, but it has gone."

"You take command," I said.

He shook his head.

"Keep on," he answered. "See, they are forming for a foot assault!"

The cavaliers, seeing that horses were a mere cumbrance against our resistance, had dismounted and sent back their mounts. Now they were forming the ranks of pikemen which they would lead, sword in hand, to be backed by the harquebusiers as they found opening.

So far the shooting from the hills had left us untouched. The rock buttresses of the gap were wide so that the place we held was a natural hall or anteroom some twelve by twenty feet, and only glancing bullets were apt to strike.

But they were ten to one, a mass attack would drive us back by sheer weight. The barrier both helped and hampered us, once the foe gained the top. We could shoot the first half dozen, and then it would be close quarters with sword and dagger and pike. A few desperate minutes and we must be swept back into the glen, scattered in the open.

The leaders were haranguing the foot-soldiers, who seemingly had no fancy for the prospect of hand grips with British sea-dogs. They had expected an easy victory, and their cavaliers had been hurled back or killed. Never, must it be remembered, had Drake done aught but laugh at them, strike and kill and depart again, laughing, with a load of loot. His fame had come from overseas before the *Golden Hynde* had swept up the coasts of Chile and Peru, sacking at will, bearing off the rich treasure of the *Cacafuego* and at last sailing westward, scot free.

The reports of our victories must have been grossly exaggerated until they believed that Drake was indeed *El Draque*. A dragon in man's shape, and his followers kin to wizards. And now, after it was boasted that he had been driven from the coast, here he was back again, for they did not yet know how many or few we were by reason of the narrow gap. Drake himself might well be with us; we might be waiting to spring an ambuscade. So they hung back. The name and fame of Drake was our best bulwark, and we shouted his name again in our defiance, though we needed all our breath to fill our lungs again after the last mêlée.

A trumpet sounded, but this time it was back of us. There, racing down the glen toward us, was the black stallion once again, and, on its back, a slight figure in the heavy Spanish saddle, urging on the horse to wild leaps while she controlled it with marvelous skill from those slim arms, sat Aymayu.

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"Back!" she cried in Quichuan. "The water-works."

It was a welcome message that she shouted as the black came pounding up, its crimson nostrils wide, champing its massive bit, disdainful of us but proudly mindful of the daring maid who bestrode him, her skirt of golden beads wide-flung with every lunge, while he shrilled his cry to the dead horses on the barrier and his mates outside. I stared in wonder at her mastery while she reined in and urgently pointed backward. She was unseen by the besiegers as yet, but they were swiftly ranking for the onset.

One volley we gave into the thick of them, then broke for cover in a swift retreat. We heard the shouts of the leaders as they breasted the barrier and saw us scuttling off and sighted the girl on the black stallion which she was now struggling hard to turn. A Spanish trumpet sounded, and the stallion, true to his training, whirled on his haunches in angry protest at the sawing bit. Aymayu's strength could no longer divert him; in a moment he would be flying back to join his fellows. I jumped for the maid, linking my hands about her waist as the stallion reared, pawing, and, as he gained earth again, I had her clear of the saddle in my arms.

She was in a most vile temper, boxing at my face beneath my casque, clinging to the reins until the forward lunge of the horse tore them loose, sputtering at me vehemently in Quichuan as, willy-nilly, I, with one hand of hers clutched in one of mine, ran for a clump of trees.

THERE were shouts at the gap. The horses had been brought up, and the cavaliers, remounted, were chasing us up the glen, overtaking us at every stride. Thrice we stopped to reload and stop them, and three fell. Aymayu stood by me as I rammed and primed and aimed, still angered at my snatching her from the saddle, not looking at me but not budging till I made our next dodge. The footmen and the harquebusiers came pouring in through the gap, and puffs of smoke marked when the bullets sped that whined above and about us.

We gained the fortress at last, turning in a last rally against four horsemen that pressed us close. Only four of the *caciques* were with us; the rest had been cut down, and Jonson was also missing. Mordaunt panted out that a cavalier had almost beheaded the sailor as he ran. We backed up the steps as the harquebusiers began to catch up to close range, the bronze doors opened and clanged down upon us, lead missiles striking them, the cavaliers for the moment baffled at the steep treads.

Sayna hurried forward.

"Listen," he said.

Above the shouting outside and the battering at the gates, there sounded a deep roar. Following the *cacique*, we hurried to the roof of the place. Out, from what I had deemed natural caverns in the rock, spouted white, foaming jets of water, shooting far with the force of the dammed up lake above them. Already several men had been bowled over and the rest were in full flight for the entrance to the glen.

They were doomed men, the most of them. Ahead of the rest the cavaliers spurred their horses, but now at the lower end of the little valley other spouts gushed from the cliffs on either side, meeting with tremendous force at about the height of a man's shoulder. Moreover, the glen sloped downward and was shaped much like a bottle. In the narrow neck it sloped up again gradually, but the shoulders of this bottle trap were soon, first a torrent, then a lake of churning waters.

The first horseman to reach the lower spouts was knocked from his saddle. The rest dismounted, seeing his fate. The frightened rabble became a mob, herded together as the way narrowed, cursing, striking, yelling, going down in the hurly-burly. Some struggled through and scrambled across the barrier like half-drowned rats, but these were very few. The rest were caught and tossed like brushwood in a flood, clinging to each other, to maddened horses, clutching at slippery holds on bare rock, or perched on a high boulder until the mounting waters surrounded them, sucked at them and swept them away.

The shadows had shifted far before the pent-up waters ceased to rush through their exits, and then the glen lay as a lake, its placid surface covering a few friends but many times their number of foes. It would be many days before the water would subside, a "full moon," said Sayna, before the glen could be passed afoot. In the meantime the survivors would have borne the news of their defeat to Lima, the news of the

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war-cry of *"El Draque!"* The knowledge that we were penned in would see an irresistible force sent out to capture us. The dammed waters could only be used once in a while. The reservoir was fed but slowly, and the Winter rains were a long way off. The Spaniards would assuredly build rafts and lay a siege to us that could only end in surrender to them or to death. Moreover, the only powder we had left was the amount left with Peter for the mining of the gates, fortunately not used. We had won only the first skirmish.

Sayna was utterly downcast. He had aged greatly since the arrival of the messenger with the news of the defeated revolution. He could see naught ahead but slavery.

"The glory of the Incas has departed," he declared. "Our gods have deserted us. It is the end."

We could not offer him much consolation. Indeed, our own concerns were pressing. We, too, had lost, and now we were worse off than when we had landed from the wreck, for now the hue and cry after us was noised along the coast. Nor had we won the galley-loads of treasure.

"Though, for that matter," said Reed, "there is enough in this place, once we can carry it off in safety. No use to leave it for the Spaniards to loot."

But Sayna was not ungrateful, as it presently proved. Angus, to whom Peter had related the main incidents of the past, for he remembered little since the blow on his head, stubbornly refused to displace me as leader, and, forwarding the only plan that I saw practical, I asked Sayna and the *caciques* as to the river Napo, which, he had said, flowed into the river of Amazons and that into the Eastern Ocean.

Back to the western coast we could not go, save at great risk. But I saw no reason why we could not build a boat and float down the Napo and then the larger river to the sea. Amazons, and what wild tribes we might meet, were not expecting us, as would be the Spaniards, and we at least stood a chance of fighting our way through.

The current would be ever with us till we met the ocean tides, and there the river of the Amazons would surely be wide enough to tack and wear. Timber there was plenty. Cloth could be supplied from the palace stores, and copper could be made into nails of the best. Ropes we could twist from the woody fibers of certain plants.

The more I looked at the plan, the better it seemed. But Sayna entered certain objections. Some distance down the Napo was a great cataract, he said. We must pass below that before building. And all our stores must be dragged through leagues of heavy jungle. First they must be transported, with ourselves, out of the glen. And how?

He was a broken-spirited man, and I saw no insurmountable difficulties for sailors. We could make a raft from timbers for the first trip; once on the banks of the Napo we could construct native *balsas*, craft formed of light porous trunks lashed with creepers, and float down as far as the cataract. There was no need for navigation, the rivers were the direct path.

I carried my information and plans to our little council, and the thing was decided upon. When I announced the determination to Sayna, inviting him and his brother *caciques* to go with us, with Aymayu and the Indian attendants, he demurred at first, then accepted.

"It matters little where I lay my bones," he said. "I will speak with the *caciques*. As for Aymayu, our gods have left us; why should we minister to them? The temple treasures shall be yours, for ye have fought valiantly; nor is it your fault the revolution failed. But, as for Aymayu, she will speak for herself."

I thought I caught the ghost of a melancholy twinkle in his eyes as he spoke, but I went to see the maid without doubt of her acceptance. I laid before her the future certainty of death or capture did we linger in Peru, told of our plans and of Sayna's acceptance.

"So," I said, in ending, "we start to gather stores and build a raft. Prepare your Indians and take such things as ye will need for your own use."

To my utter astonishment she blazed up and refused point-blank. Nor after that would she give reasons or do aught but sulk so that I had to call in Sayna. Again I thought his glance held amusement. The twain held a violent argument in Quichuan that far outstripped my poor vocabulary.

"She will not go," said Sayna at last, "because you have arranged all things without consulting her. She says thou art too apt to command and that she is accustomed

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to be obeyed. Thou didst rudely snatch her from the horse——"

"And saved her life," I put in.

"She says she could have mastered the horse," said Sayna. "Though, indeed, she never mounted such a beast before," he added. "She swears that she will not be ordered and that she will stay. And, when she is set," he added ruefully, "I know not how to persuade her."

"Faith, but I do," I broke in, looking at her where she sat like a beautiful and sulky child, trying to understand our Spanish, of which she knew scarce any. "We must go, and she can not be left behind. Therefore, she goes with us, if not willingly, then as I took her from the horse. Tell her that."

I was in no mood to be brooked by this much ado about nothing, anxious to get to work and away, and my words hardly needed translation. Her eyes flashed. Had they been daggers I should have suffered a twin death. Then her petulant face broke into a smile.

"I will go," she said in slow Quichuan that I might understand. "But not at thy bidding. If I am asked by thy friend with the scar that blushes when he looks at me, I will go."

She seemed to eye me narrowly, but I was glad to end a foolish argument.

"So be it," I answered shortly and turned upon my heel.

"And he will teach me thy tongue as he has already started," she said as I walked away, "so that when I reach thy land I shall be as one of you."

I wondered if she was in love with Gilbert. And he with her? But it was none of my business, and I joined the rest.

Angus took charge of getting together the stores with Reed as his lieutenant. Mordaunt I set to building the raft. I set for myself the collecting of copper for bolts and nails. Gilbert I assigned to looking after our armament.

"But first," I said to Gilbert, "go thou and ask Aymayu whether she will go with us. She says she will if thou but ask her."

Gilbert flushed, and Angus looked up quizzically. Reed guffawed outright.

"Oh ho, sits the wind in that quarter?" he jeered. "Take my advice, my masters, and leave the pretty witch behind if ye value your friendship."

Gilbert ignored him and left us. I affected not to hear Simon, though I itched to thrash the boor. I supposed he meant to estrange Gilbert and myself by hinting that I was jealous. He was ever a marplot and a mischief-maker.

CHAPTER XXII

I SETTLE WITH REED

WE BUILT the boat at last of green timbers, nailed and bolted with copper, calked with cotton strips and resinous gums, working at the foot of a cataract that leaped down in one vast rush of foam to the depth of twelve hundred feet with such violence that, leagues after we had left it, our ears were buffeted by its sound.

We had small need for mast or sail, but we managed them and, after infinite difficulties in transporting our stores to the foot of the falls, got aboard. At the end the *caciques* refused to accompany us, save Sayna. The rest preferred to join a band of outlaws who lived a savage life in the mountains. This, said Sayna, he was too old to do. So our little company was made up of Angus, Gilbert, Reed, Peter, Mordaunt, Law, myself, Neptune, Sayna, ten Indian servants, who were to act as sailors, and Aymayu.

Between Aymayu and me there seemed to have sprung up a coldness that I could not account for. The more I planned for her comfort, the more she would thank some other for the thought. When she met me, she seemed only to be looking at herself as in a mirror or through a glazing at the scene beyond. To Gilbert she was the opposite, and to Angus she acted as a fond daughter. Where she ignored me and I her, she snubbed Reed. To all appearance she still deemed him dead from her poison, and I could see this treatment rankle in him so that I watched him closely.

The third day saw us leave the Napo and float upon the mighty Amazon, mighty even at this point. We were committed to the wilderness. No canoe ruffled its waters; on either side the forest rose dark and impregnable, high walls between which the river rushed on over its rocky bed. We saw few beasts but many caimans basking on the banks of sand or mud and great serpents twisted in the trees; heard no sound but the wash of the river and the deep rustle of the forest. The utter solitude weighed on us, though every hour

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swept us on toward the salt Atlantic.

For days we glided thus smoothly and then commenced a long era of trouble. A score of times we were nearly wrecked in furious rapids; once we were flung headlong over a cataract when the wind thwarted its warning, spun in the pool beneath and forced to mend our bark as best we could. Insects stung and fevered us so that we dared not tie up at night but gave ourselves over to the mercy of the current, where they were less vexing.

When we landed to procure food from the strange beasts, armored lizards and long-nosed river-hogs and monkeys, savages fell upon us and followed us for miles in their canoes. Our little store of powder was all that saved us a many times. One flash and blast from a musket and they would disappear within the jungled woods. But we saw no women warriors and Aymayu scouted their existence.

"Women," she said, "have no need to fight with men's weapons. They have their own."

This sally was aimed at me by way of Angus, the words to him the sidelong glance to me. All this time she made marvelous strides in English, and often I saw her privately studying the golden plate she had brought with her. Once I told her that my Uncle Zadik could decipher it for her, being a Rosicrucian.

"Gilbert will find it out for me," she answered, and I shrugged my shoulders at her and said nothing more.

In the main the river ran in long level stretches at about a league an hour, sometimes increasing in narrow channels. For the most part its width was a mile for long distances. Again it widened out to four or five, sometimes running between low islands in many canals. The banks changed at last to table-topped bluffs on the north and gentle curves to the south. Sometimes we passed vast areas of submerged trees, showing the river was in flood. And then it widened in a muddy tide so vast that the shores were lost and only the color and taste of it proved we had not reached the sea.

Now our difficulties grew apace. We could not hope to cross the ocean, even to weather a slight gale in such a craft. Our seams were kept tight only by fresh stuffing; the green logs had warped, and my map held out no other course but to adventure northward along the coast and land somewhere where we could find more suitable wood, essaying to build a caravel that would suffice to carry us, our stores and treasure across the ocean.

Too far north we dared not go, since we were now practically without powder and easy prey to any Spanish vessel of the Main that carried armament. We had no mind to end our adventure in some dungeon on the isle of Cubagua with Spanish to torture out our lives. The Rio Plate lay to the south. Thence sailed the Don's treasure ships laden with gold from its rich sands. Of such we must be wary.

So, as the river water joined the salt—or, rather, thrust its way oceanward like a brown tongue between the sparkling crystal of the sea on either hand—we edged shoreward, both for safety and for water, landing at last upon a low but fertile island where we anchored in a tiny bay and made camp.

The place was uninhabited. That we made sure of. It lay at least two leagues from the land, and we were safe to make a fire and stretch our grateful legs upon the solid earth. Turtles were abundant, and we feasted off their eggs with some doves, of which I brought down a dozen from one discharge of a musket, filled with grit and pebbles for shot. We had now left perhaps two pounds of powder with some handfuls of bullets. Mordaunt set to work making him a stout bow and arrows for our future provisioning. In fact, we all agreed to stay upon the isle for several days, so tired were we of the cramped quarters aboard the craft that had otherwise served us so well. There were two springs upon it, one of fair size and the other a great bubbling among turf that spilled its overflow in the bay where we were anchored, the only indent of any consequence in the shore that curved steadily in the shape of an egg.

So, content, despite our inner ache for England, to loll for a while in ease upon this little sea Eden, snakeless, without biting insects or flies, shady, though none of the trees were of great size, with food a-plenty and naught to do but doze and sleep and stretch to sleep again, we spent four lazy days. Aymayu coaxed off Gilbert to make the round of our tiny dominion, often taking Angus with them, though he set aside some time every day in which to drill the Indians.

"For," he said, "we may have to fight

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again before we get quit of all our troubles, and mayhap we can make soldiers out of them as well as sailors."

Indeed, he did wonders with them, save that they waited ever on the order. But we had swords and daggers enough to go around, thanks to the ones taken from the dead cavaliers in the glen, and they had copper-headed pikes and partizans, or battle-axes, one of which Mordaunt annexed for his particular weapon, and before long Angus had whipped them into some shape.

They were brave enough with a leader—as they had proven on the trip—and, once roused, good fighters. I worked over plans for our next caravel, lamenting the lack of proper tools, since we would have to hew our timbers and planks with the bronze axes and this time make a sea-tight vessel.

REED, shut off in his own companionship, was growing ugly. I could not abide the man. Aymayu overpassed him entirely, as did Gilbert. Angus tolerated him, and Peter followed my lead, while Mordaunt and Law frankly abominated him. The Indians he bullied when he could, and all avoided him so that he stewed in the juice of his own jaundice and daily stalked off by himself or moodily sat in camp, either staring eastward to where England lay across the leagues, calculating doubtless on his disposal of the loot that would be his, or else looking wickedly after Gilbert and Aymayu as they would go laughing off together.

On the fourth day Reed insisted upon a division of the treasure.

"I have earned my share," he said, "as much as any of ye. And, by Mary, I intend to have it now before ye pick quarrel with me and cheat me out of it. Prate not to me of common honesty, Trevennion," he went on; "thou art purblind and oversober and too apt to moralize, but thou canst not gainsay that ye would like to leave me marooned upon this isle, one and all of ye."

"If we do, it will be from some fault of your own," I said. "If we eschew your company, it is because we like not your ways, and of this ye have been warned."

"Tush!" he answered. "What have manners and morals to do with such a company as ours? We are adventurers, bound by no codes. Each for himself, save when all are attacked, say I. When I fight, I fight because our common safety defends me. I no more give a bubble of spittle for any of you than ye for me. We are but pirates, bound together like a pack of wild dogs for better protection. Why hide the fact ye hate me because I covet that ye desire, in your own way, for yourself?

"Thou canst not hide that, with all your smug propriety, Trevennion. Thou dost hate to see me cast eyes or lay hands upon the maid, not, forsooth, so much for the moralities as because she has affected thee with the tricks of her sex. Thou desirest her as much as I do. But I would handle her to please myself, whereas you would live only to please her. And you a man!

"Bah, you chivalry-mongers raise my bile! Women are to be used for men's solace and amusement, to breed him children. For a man to tie himself to one is the act of a fool. As well hug an empty bottle after ye have quaffed the wine. Suppose the wine please ye not when ye have tasted it? Are there not other vintages. Would ye drink small ale all your life. Thou art a man in stature, Trevennion, but not in practise."

I hung on to my temper, or I would have interrupted him sooner. The nearer we got to home the more I desired to be rid of his company. My gorge rose at his callousness. But I was not minded to quarrel with him openly.

"It were best that thou treat the maid with all deference and in the manner of our thinking," I said, "or thou mayest be indeed left behind."

"What said I?" he answered. "Ye only need the excuse. But, by——, if I be left, my share of the treasure stays with me. That I have won and intend to keep. As to the maid, a fig for her and her virginity. I can buy that commodity in the open market if I have gold. Let us divide the loot, say I. Put my request to the vote; thou wilt find it popular."

The thing was not unreasonable, and, when I broached it, from Aymayu down they agreed, and the stuff was brought ashore. Sayna alone would none of it. He had set the Incan gods behind him, and the temple treasures we had brought were no longer sacred symbols to him but tokens of an unrewarded faith.

As to the maid, I doubt if she had ever taken her temple service seriously, save as

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a flattery to her in holding office and her own importance. She clapped her hands with delight when we set the loot upon the sands in a glittering heap, bringing it ashore on the raft that had served us for such portage. But the jewels meant no more to her than bright pebbles for adornment or amusement. I insisted that she should have a major share, overruling Reed's grumbling.

We divided in this wise: a certain allotment for the Indians, held in trust for them when they should land in England, full shares for Angus, Gilbert, Peter, myself and Aymayu, half such portions for Law, Mordaunt and Reed and a gemmed hoop for Neptune, who did not seem to overappreciate it. We were rich men, all of us in our degrees, when the gems should be sold and the metals melted down, and it was curious to see how each sat by his share and dreamed his dream of future aggrandisement.

We were unlike other freebooters in this, that we did not gamble for each other's share. Reed would have liked enough, but none of us would have diced with him. Aymayu was the only person who made any complaint and that was anent Gilbert. She declared the gold and jewels had changed him, and, indeed, it seemed to. There was a light in his eyes, not of greed, but of happiness, and he walked apart, humming to himself, at which neglect Aymayu pouted.

I thought I knew the cause. Gilbert, I shrewdly suspected, had scraped together the remnants of his heritage to join Drake, and I knew that his share had been smaller than that of other gentlemen adventurers. Now he could take his place again and provide Aymayu, if he was minded to—as I felt certain—marry the maid, with things accrediting a proper rank, denying her nothing she might wish in the new land.

Presently they made up their quarrel and went away, she running, he in pursuit. But a black cloud that gathered over the distant land and gradually spread seaward drove them back, the more swiftly as rain began to fall heavily and sent us all to the shelter of a cave that we made our headquarters, facing the bay, where our poor twisted vessel rode at an anchor made of bronze.

The wind came moaning over us amid the low trees and ruffling up the sea in whitening billows. It was still midafternoon, but a gray dusk settled down, and we lit a fire to offset a chill in the air.

Aymayu was the first to see the waterspouts, touching my arm and pointing seaward to where a long cloud funneled down, waving a pendulous tip like the trunk of an elephant. Behind it others took shape, and then the uneasy sea pyramided up to meet the drooping tentacles, joined in black whirls of hour-glass shaped water and rushed madly to and fro as if in some weird dance.

I have never seen the sea rise so swiftly. Over us the wind turned to a gale, a hurricane, scattering broken boughs upon the sand and lashing the tide, that was flooding, to a frenzy. The ship strained at her cable, but we could not mend matters. It was the best we had, nor could we have got out in the raft to set another, had we possessed it.

Straight for the little bay, while we gazed helpless, rushed one of the spouts, straight for the ship. Down came a flood of rain and blotted out everything, while the roar of the gale deafened us. Sometimes a mass of surf came surging gray out of the blackness to within a fathom's length of the cave-mouth, though it was well above all signs of high tide.

The rain beat, and the wind shrieked unabated for hours, and then at sunset it ceased as rapidly as it had come, the black clouds driven far seaward by a windy power that unrolled behind it a breath of clear sky, save where a panoply of gold and crimson clouds hung over the shore mountains. The tide had ebbed, and the sand lay wet and bare.

The ship was gone, sucked under or drawn up into the watery vortex. Gone, leaving no trace. So was our little raft, utterly vanished. Gone was the canvas for our sails, the copper bolts and nails we had hoped to reuse; gone was our only ferry to the next landing where we might rebuild. There was no tree on the isle thicker than the calf of my leg, none with a straight length of four or five feet at most, so twisted was their growth by the almost constant buffet of the wind since they had broken from their seed. We were once more marooned, this time upon a tiny isle with all the wide Atlantic mocking us.

Joyless days came and went. The useless treasure, the only thing saved except our raiment and arms, was forgotten, and we

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sat listless, gazing at gray, weltering seas. The hurricane was but the precursor of the season of storms that followed fast. We could not hope to build even a raft of such material as we had at hand. All our cordage had gone with the ship; there were no fibrous vines from which to spin more. Moreover, the sea swarmed with sharks. We had often watched their curving fins patrolling the shore-line, and now they were jailers, if such a prison as ours needed keepers. They would nose to pieces any such poor thing as we might put together.

FOR a while despair invaded all of us. We moodily sat or walked apart, brooding over our ill fortune and devising ways to circumvent our dire fate, only to reject them over and over again. In one streak of fair weather, between the rains that fell most of the time, I made the circuit of the little isle, leaving even Neptune forlorn in camp, pacing on and seeing nothing, engrossed in black thought, striding over the hummocks and hollows, with my sword clanging at my leg, indifferent to all but our evil plight.

The isle humped gently in the middle, the rise covered with the low trees, thorny-branched and with leaves that closed together at nightfall but now were wide apart in a thick screen. In my revery I thought I heard the cry of a gull and paid no heed to it; then it came again, carried by a gust of wind, no gull's voice but the scream of a woman. Of Aymayu!

It came from the opposite side of the hump, and I set off running at top speed, dodging under the low branches, torn by thorns as I broke through, my heart pounding with a sudden fear that I might be too late for the villainy I knew had happened. Since the loss of the ship, Reed had become openly malevolent, showing his teeth in a snarl upon every occasion, leering more and more openly at the maid, seemingly striving to provoke a rupture with Gilbert or with any other in his devil's whimsies.

Another scream spurred me, and I broke through the greenery on the far side of the hump. Two sand-hills made a little cove by the smaller spring where turf and some scrub palms grew. There were two figures struggling on the grass, Reed's and Aymayu's. The maid was striking at his face, so strongly seamed with lust I could plainly read its evil design as I raced down, sword in hand.

But another was ahead of me. Leaping over the sand-crest to the right came Gilbert, his blade flashing with a shout to the maid to be of good heart. Reed looked and got to his feet with a vicious kick at Aymayu, who squirmed aside, jumped up and ran like a deer toward me, then paused and turned to watch the two of them as Reed's sword grated against Gilbert's eager steel.

Aymayu stood with her hair streaming in disorder, her breasts heaving and her eyes a blaze of blue flame, unconscious of me as I reached her.

"Oh, if I were a man!" I heard her mutter. "Then I could do my own killing! Ah!" She suddenly screamed and would have rushed at Simon had I not caught her arm and thrust her to one side as with black wrath in my heart I went down the hill to kill Reed.

It had happened within a dozen passes. Gilbert's foot had met some shell or hidden bit of rock, and on its edge his ankle had turned and his guard faltered. And Simon's ready blade had caught him high and deep in the chest. Gilbert fell backward, disengaging from the point that had entered him and, twisting as he went, dropped face downward on the sand, inert, his blood sinking in the thirsty soil. Over him stood Simon Reed, the crimson drops trickling down his blade, a sneer upon his face.

I wiped that off. Coming soft-footed over the sand, he did not hear me. Thus far he had not known of my presence. With my open hand I gave him such a buffet as sent him staggering and marked his cheek with five crimson streaks that slowly faded into the livid hue that overspread his features as he regained his balance.

When men are nearly matched, there is often but a slight thing that nerves the arm and stands 'twixt life and death. There was little to choose between our swordplay; the light was even and I was going to make certain that the ground was fair. Kill him I would, but I was at a cold heat and in no hurry that might botch the job.

On his side was the hate that was mutual between us, a hate that had grown from the time I fleshed him outside the Dolphin Inn. I shared that, and there was also vengeance for the good comrade across whose body I had stepped to wipe the smile from the

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murderer's face. Also, I fought for something else that at that time I did not sense.

There was no need of words between us. At last the occasion had come. He did not dodge the issue; I doubt if he greatly feared it. I spoke once.

"The ground is not level here," I said. "Where the tide is out it is firmer. Lead on."

He bowed as if to let me pass. I was not chancing a stab in the back, and he was desperate, knowing that he had yet to deal with Angus and the rest if he dispatched me. So we walked down together to the lower level, and, along the ridge of the dune, the maid followed. I was but half conscious of this as I hastily recalled my bouts with Reed and weighed the method I should adopt.

He forced the issue from the first with a savage series of lightning lunges that perforce made me give circling ground so vicious were they and given with such steely strength of arm. But my work with Angus stood me in well as I offered the true angle rather than all my force of wrist to the thrusts. Reed's face was convulsed with hate; his teeth gritted as our swords hissed, and foam came to his lips that he spat savagely toward me.

And I began to laugh. Not of my own conscious will but with cold mockery of his efforts that made him redouble them, leaping in and out with fierce stabs delivered at the full length of arm with his legs wide-compassed. To these I offered no *riposte*, content to keep my blade in touch with his, to turn slowly and ever smile at him.

Once he nearly had me in a dazzling play of wrist and upward feint. His sword grazed my neck and, though I knew it not at the time, started the blood. A fraction faster and he would have severed my jugular.

It takes many scratches to make a wound, and Reed knew that I was reserving my own offensive until he should somewhat tire. It maddened him and sped his brain to a trick so crafty that, but for blind luck, would have left me gasping like a slashed pig. He redoubled the speed of his thrusts and, springing far back so that our blades were disengaged, fell to one knee on the sand. I remembered the lesson Angus had given him upon the poop of the *Christopher*, and I knew, too, the guard for the drive at my eye that must surely follow.

Instead, he scooped up from the drying sand a palmful of grains and half flung, half jerked them at my face, running in crouched to pierce me through the midriff. I closed my eyes against the blinding grit and swung my sword in a full circle so that it drew a hoop of steel between us and so far set his blade aside that it ran between my doublet and my skin, for neither of us was wearing armor on the isle. I clapped my left arm hard upon the blade and swerved short, snapping it between ribs and elbow. Then, wiping the clinging sand away, I faced him as he cringed.

"Kill him!"

Aymayu was standing where the dune wedged to the level, leaning forward, hissing out the words.

"I'll kill," I jerked at her over my shoulder. "Fetch me Gilbert's sword. Fetch it!" I commanded as she stood stock-still, staring at me in amaze, while Reed's gray face twitched as he waited for death.

"Your own is unbroken," she answered me.

"Must I go get it myself?" I asked. "I am no butcher, girl. Fetch me the sword."

In the stress of the moment I doubt not that my will was centered strongly enough to overmatch hers, for, dumbly, her face still mystified, she went back for the blade. I took it and stuck its point in the sand between us.

"There is your chance for a few moments more of life," I said to Reed. "Gilbert's hand is yet warm upon the grip. Now cover it and say thy prayers before we cross blades, for, by the God that sees us, I shall avenge him."

It was the first time I had ever seen Reed cringe as his fingers closed upon the hilt of Gilbert's weapon. It was only for a second, and then he was at me. Once he nearly pulled my sword from my grasp, and once I nearly served him the same; then something broke my reserve, and I went after him with such chill fury that he gave backward steadily toward the sea, his eyes desperate.

I touched him on the shoulder and on the lower ribs; I sliced his forearm in a twisting thrust and knew that his defense was breaking down, feeling ever through his guard as a snake might seek to find its way through a close-barred cage. And my youth began to serve me. Reed's breath came hard and harder; once or twice he gulped dryly, and his guard lacked the stiff resistance it had held.

I laughed at him aloud now.

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"Where will ye take it?" I asked. "In your false throat, or shall I cleave your rotten heart or—will ye have it thus?"

I had swept his point aside and down with an overturn of my wrist, and, swiveling back and lending all my force and weight to the thrust, I drove fairly through his body. The lunge went hard but firm until the guard slammed against his hairy chest. The steel had gone through bone and flesh alike, as had my father's sword through the Don on Admiral Clinton's flagship. The dying body of Reed hung there while I strove to pluck the weapon loose. His eyes rolled upward till naught but the whites were exposed; his jaw sagged as I eased him down, set my foot upon his chest and wrenched free my sword.

So I went to where my comrade lay face-down by the spring. As I knelt beside him, the tears gathering in my eyes, the maid stood with me.

"I was wrong," she said. "It was better to kill him while he still struggled and hoped. You fight as you talk and act."

Suddenly she put her arms about my neck and kissed me fair upon the lips. Then she flung herself beside Gilbert and sought to turn his body over. Yet I could not but mark the bright flush that showed in her turning face.

"I fought not for thee, but Gilbert," I answered gruffly, vexed at the caress above my dead friend. And I knew in that same moment that I lied.

We faced the limp body upward, and Aymayu crouched down by it, crooning, stroking the blood-smeared lips. Then she sprang up.

"He lives," she cried joyfully. "He lives!"

There was indeed a flutter of the eyelids, and for a fleeting second the soul of Gilbert looked up at me to tell that still it lingered.

"Run, run!" I cried. "Bring something for a litter."

But I spoke to nothing. Already she was off, skimming the sands, while I undid poor Gilbert's jerkin and bathed his wound.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PLATE SHIP

GILBERT owed his life to Aymayu, and hers wore to a thread from her tending of him. Peter and I could do little without simples, and it was her steady devotion, her constant watching to allay the fever, that brought him round the turn, weak as a babe while she hovered over him, hollow-eyed and gaunt of limb herself from lack of rest, feeding him, crooning him to sleep.

At last, when I could see that the tide had changed in his favor, I sent her away and replaced her with Peter and myself.

"You'll kill yourself," I told her when she demurred.

"And what of that?" she parried, her blue eyes wide to mine.

I had no answer. Gilbert's gaze followed her already in undying gratitude. She had dragged her lover back from death and talked of dying herself. The ways of maids were beyond me, I decided, thinking her overwrought.

As for Reed, we had left him where he fell, and, when for health's sake I sent the Indians to bury him, the tide had taken him. Doubtless the sharks made a meal of him.

The weather grew steadily stormier, and then there came a fair spell in time for the mending Gilbert to lie out where the sun could warm his scanty blood. We seemed doomed to stay upon the isle forever. There was no danger of starvation, but there was not, for me, at least, much joy in living. So far south were we that Drake, if he had won home and come back to the Main, would never search for us in these latitudes. I grew petulant even at Aymayu and Gilbert so that the maid would look at me wistfully, as if afraid of my displeasure, and Gilbert in a puzzled fashion that I could not fathom. I got to going with Neptune to a rocky point that faced the east, and there from dawn to sunset I stayed, holding the useless chart in my hand, looking toward England, mind-sick and heart-sick with longing for the moors of Devon, the dog beside me, quiet as if graven out of rock, his brown eyes upturned, his muzzle close enough to my hand to lick it once in a while.

Sometimes Aymayu brought me food, and I bade her set it down and then forgot it. Sometimes Angus came and sat beside me in silence, soothing me with his wordless comradeship, but in truth I was no fit company even for Neptune, whose fond heart forgave all my faults and made them virtues in the alchemy of his faithful brain.

So I sat one day, my gaze hopelessly sweeping the horizon when, just a stain of blue to the southward, I saw something rising above the rim of the sea that set

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my heart to pounding. Too small to be a cloud, I watched it eagerly. The blue object flashed to silver. It was a ship tacking shoreward. A ship! A Spaniard, without doubt. A ship from the River Plate, gold-laden.

Not that I cared about its lading. Mad thoughts crowded me, to lure it to a mooring in the bay and somehow capture it. Mad thoughts, indeed, and yet it seemed as if we could not let it pass. Better to die fighting. Aymayu would fight with the rest of us. There was no fear of her permitting any Don to lay hands upon her. But there was Gilbert, wounded, helpless. I tore at my beard. Once I resolved to start a fire of signal and leaped up; then I slumped down again in despair, Neptune whining in understanding of my agony of mind. To let it go by, to say naught of sighting it to the rest, but hold the canker in my breast. What to do?

The ship came nearer, two-masted with swelling sails and high poop and prow, her sails hauled strangely for the best favor of the breeze. The truth flashed upon me. She was making for the island. Perhaps for water or for turtle. There was no mistake. Her helmsman shifted her a point or two. They must know the anchorage.

I broke into the camp with my news. Swiftly we lined our action. First to clear all outward traces of our presence, taking everything to the cave and razing footprints and other evidences at the spring. It would be close to twilight when she made the mooring. They would send a small party ashore, doubtless unarmed. These we would ambush. With luck we might overcome a second. Then in their own boats. . . .

A better scheme came to me, and I set the Indians to making a rude raft of the biggest branches. These we bore to one horn of the bay and lashed as best we could, making it high with seaweed, launching it in a pool of the rocks. The tide was flooding; the ship, not yet in sight. Soon it appeared, coming on with creaming lines, stately in the coming twilight, sails furling, and then, deftly, into the wind and our anchor. Our blood racing as we hid at our various stations, we heard the rattle of the chain and saw a boat swung out to the water, saw it laden with casks and seven men clamber into it, six at the sweep, one perched among the casks.

Angus, Mordaunt, and Law lay with me in the bushes by the spring. Five Indians were there also and Neptune, coached to silence. Peter stayed in the cave with Gilbert. Aymayu insisted on coming with us. The other Indians stayed with the raft.

On came the shore-boat, the men chatting, their voices clear in the still air. Then the order of their officer as they rolled the casks toward the spring. As they bent to fill them, we were on them with a swift rush. The officer had a sword, the rest knives, but they lasted only for a short, fierce struggle. Mordaunt brained one with his partizan, and he lay fouling the spring with his brains and blood. The others were dispatched as easily, and we dragged off their bodies to the bushes, cleaned up the muck of combat as best we could and went back to ambush again.

There was a wait while the sun sank over the distant land. At last another boat dropped into the water and like a big insect came to the beach with straddling oars. There were pale lights showing now in the hull.

There were only five men in the second boat. The one who steered was again an officer and wore a corselet that caught the last gleams of the sun. He urged the men on in an ill temper, swearing at the runagates sent for the water, who had neglected their task to seek fruit and turtles' eggs. There was no suspicion of anything wrong so far, and they beached the boat and marched up to the spring.

There, dark as it was, the officer sensed some sinister meaning in the trampled grass, and he drew his sword and faced about as we leaped out upon them. Angus took him and there was as pretty a show of sword-play as could be asked. I dispatched the man who came clumsily at me; Mordaunt accounted for another with his ax, and the Indians strangled the two remaining with their hands. I saw the dulled flashes of the writhing swords and now and then a spark or two before Angus seemed to set the Spaniard's sword to one side with the ease of one removing a briar with a cane and ran him through.

Then we ran to the cave for our muskets and pistols, loaded with the last of our powder and shot. It would not do to wait for a general alarm. If we won, it would be through surprize. There would probably be, all told, some fifty men aboard the

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Spanish ship, outside of Indian maroons. I gave a loaded pistol each to Peter and to Gilbert, in case we should not succeed and the Spaniards discover the cave, and handed another to Aymayu. These were not for defense but for salvation at the last moment. Also Peter had two muskets and his sword.

"But I am going with you," said Aymayu. "I can swim better than any of you. I will not be left ashore."

"Thy place is with Gilbert," I told her shortly, for I had not thought her feelings so shallow. How could she leave the man she loved wounded?

"Dost thou say that?" she asked, her eyes big in the dusk.

"Assuredly," I answered.

Her widening eyes showed a circle of white all about.

"I hate you," she cried and flung the pistol down.

I had no time to fool with a girl's whimsies, and we hurried off to the horn of the bay where the little raft was set in the pool. On it we placed the primed muskets and our weapons and, resting our arms upon it, struck out for the galleon. All color had faded from the sky, save one purple wash in which the stars were twinkling. The seaweed was piled high, trailed so as to cover the weapons and ourselves, and only the streaks of water-fire betrayed us as aught than a bank of loosened rockweed floating on the last of the tide. And the water-fire might well have been made by fish who followed the weed and fed upon the smaller fry within it.

The poop windows were ablaze. Two of them on the larboard side were open to the night, and we heard the clink of glasses, a snatch of song and laughter as we half drifted, half propelled ourselves down to where the boat-falls trailed and, silently as ghosts, went up them to the low waist and dropped barefooted, quiet as cats, to the deck.

A gigantic maroon stood at the opposite rail, gazing at the land. Another was shifting a deck-lantern and came round the mast full upon us. Him I tackled, choking off his cry with both hands about his throat, while some one, Angus belike, gave him his quietus between the shoulders. Mordaunt had cleared the beam of the vessel in great leaps, and, as my man dropped, there was a soft thud where the broken-necked maroon fell to the planks as the boatswain came stepping softly back again.

All this time, through an open hatch where a hidden lamp glowed softly, we could hear the murmur of the crew at their evening meal. A smell of oil and humanity, blent with the reek of garlicked stew, came up as we softly closed the hatch and battened it down. Next, working by the light of the deck-lantern and the stars, we tried a bow-gun and, finding it loaded, trained it on the main cabin door in the mid-deck of the poop.

Mordaunt stood beside it with glowing linstock while we went aft, secured the lower doors and, mounting the lower ladders to the cabin deck, stood at the windows for a moment. Inside was a table covered with white damask and set with golden plate and crystal cups and flagons. About it sat eight officers in rich undress, also two priests.

One, who we later discovered was the captain, a swarthy man with a pointed black beard that was spiked forward by his ruff, was telling a tale at which they all leaned back or forward, holding their sides as they guffawed. And then one the priests, his face straight but his eyes twinkling with liking for the tale he was about to give them, must have caught sight of our faces at the glass, for, without being greatly startled, deeming it the rude curiosity of one of the watch, he spoke to the commander, who turned to one of the maroon servants that stood about and sent him to the door.

I SUPPOSE it was bravado born of the ease with which the ship had been delivered into our hands, for all our fears, backed by the knowledge that behind us stood Mordaunt and Law at the culverin, ready to fire, and our ten Indians ranged at the foot of the ladder. At any rate, with a nudge on the arm to Angus, who seemed to catch or share my intent, as the door opened, we put aside the gaping maroon and entered the cabin with our swords drawn, bowing to the company, who thrust back their chairs and stared at us with wonder and amaze too great for action.

Mark the picture for yourself. The officers of the Plate ship that was moored off a little island in seas that Spain ruled, the thought of enemies far from them in their haughty security, their wine half-quaffed, a tale half-told, the laugh from the

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last jest yet lingering—and then of a sudden the door gapes and behold—two men in dinted corselets and casques above strange raiment, tanned and long-bearded in gold and grizzly hair—blue-eyed! Back of us two in the doorway the figure of Law, a grim suggestion of many others.

"*Dios!*" cried the commander. "What means this?"

I answered him in Spanish.

"My name is Trevennion," I said, "and this is the Scotch nobleman, Angus, both officers of Francis Drake. Is the meaning plain?"

I laughed to see their jaws go slack and their fearful eyes roll at each other while they muttered:

"*El Draque! El Draque!*"

And crossed themselves, such was the magic of that name, conjured by the doughty deeds of our commander.

"Both your shore-parties are killed," I went on. "The hatches are battened. A culverin is trained upon this cabin, and the ship is ours unless you gentlemen wish to dispute the matter. In that case——"

I turned and made a sign to Law. He stepped to the break of the ladder and gave the signal. Then he and Mordaunt and the ten Indians, whom Angus had trained in the words, gave out the yell,

"A Drake! A Drake!"

There was no need for further argument of words or blows. They filed out one by one, and we bound them hand and foot and stacked them up against their own rail, while we retrained the culverin upon the forward hatch and, lifting it, bade the crew emerge. They too had heard the muffled cry of "Drake! Drake!" and came up cowed to the surrender.

We bundled them all aboard their long-boat like so many herrings, making three trips of it ashore, and there laid them on the sand, while we took Gilbert down to the boat and so out to the ship. The tide was changing to the ebb; there was naught to take with us but the loot from the temple and the filled water-casks, which we did to the rumble of low oaths from the sands. We had lit torches, and the trussed Spaniards lay marveling to see so few English, with so few Indians, taking appropriation of their galleon. At the last, when all was stowed, Angus and I stood over the commander.

"You are taking the ship?" he asked.

"How else could we leave?" I answered. "We have none of our own."

He spluttered in his beard as some dim idea of the truth broke on him. "We leave you a fair exchange," I went on. "A pleasant island well watered and well victualed, a cave to dwell in and time to repent all your sins. Here is a dagger—" I stuck one in the sand beside him—"you can release yourselves. *Adios, señores*, and many thanks."

We rowed off laughing as the commander scuffled in the sand to reach the dagger and sever his own cords first. Aboard, Mordaunt struck the pin from the shackle, and we let cable and anchor stay together while the sails came up. In the dim night, fanned by a fair wind, we glided from the little bay in weather that had held good for our venture, pointed up to where the polar star was at the end of our bowsprit, fell off some few points eastward and headed home, well found in ship, provision and in arms, our hull deep with Plata gold.

> Haul bullies, all. Pull my hearties, pull-O!
> For there's yellow gold, so I've been told,
> On the banks of the rolling Rio.

So sang Mordaunt and Law and Peter, while Angus and I hummed the refrain. I would dearly have liked to give the Dons a parting broadside in derisive salute, but it was sheer waste of powder. Instead Neptune, grasping the glad occasion, set forepaws on the after rail and, his head jerking back with every effort, barked a defiance and farewell to where, on the marge of the island, the Spaniards mustered foolish and saw us set out gleefully to sea.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOW JOURNEYS END

IT MIGHT seem, having a ship, that all our troubles were swiftly lessening to an end; but it proved no pleasure voyage after all. We had made scant northing when a sea-gale of strong winds, blowing from skies swept clear and bright by the sheer strength of the breeze, held us back for days and, increasing, fairly drove us at last to the south. The Spaniards have small skill in building ships, and our galleon was top-heavy and clumsy bowed. Eat the wind she could not, and we were fain to go about and scuttle along as awkward

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as a duck on land, with the gale sending huge seas to slap at our high stern.

From storm we ran into no wind at all and pitched upon glassy seas until our water and fresh provender grew low, rising and falling on long heaves of swell that sickened the Indians until they lay down and hoped to die. More wind came at last, still from the north. Then, in the lower forties, came a roaring, snorting gale that blew us all across the Ethiopic Ocean to the southern cape of Africa, where we were battered by storm after storm until the seams opened.

Twice we fought off blacks at the mouths of swampy rivers when we landed for meat and water, and then we essayed to cross the line where north and south latitudes blend to the equator. From shore came out the slimy current of some great river, and in that stinking tide we wallowed like a pig in a slough, sea-fire all about us, the pitch bubbling from the deck seams, the metal blistering to the touch, our water stale and foul, marshy odors stealing out from land on puffs of feverish air, hot as that from a furnace.

Gilbert was set back by this land sickness, and our Indians dropped off like flies in a sudden frost. Three we lost overnight, four more the next day, gasping for breath, groaning when awful pangs racked them. There was some small store of medicines aboard, and with these I did what might be done, but, though the camphire and aloes and a bitter bark aided us, the Indians had no spirit to resist.

We landed upon Euridi and rested, wan ghosts, too sick to work the ship, fever-racked, hollow-eyed. And, against winds that still baffled, as if the Fates were minded to try us to the utmost ere they let down the bars to England, we crept up to the Gorgades and so to the Canaria group.

Off Morocco we sighted our first Spaniard and slipped by with thankfulness. In our good English ships we had had the heels of any Don-built vessel; we could run or fight at will—now we could neither run nor fight. For, if we essayed to work the ship, there were none left at the guns. With two for the ropes, one to swab and ram, and one to prime and elevate and fire, it takes four men to man a gun, and we had but three Indians, besides Angus, Mordaunt, Peter, Law and myself.

We edged off west again toward the islands marked Maderao, the which we never sighted, and at last slanted home for England. It was the early Spring of the year fifteen hundred and eighty-one—so long had been our wanderings, so slow our progress home, more of a drift than a sail, flung back time and time again and snailing north and east at last dragging a beard of seagrowth along our sides and keel that made five knots the best that we could do with full sail and following wind. Three and a quarter years had gone since we set sail from Plymouth. And where was Drake?

Aymayu felt the cold of our latitudes and sat shivering in her wraps, looking at me, I thought, half pitiful, half fearful, all reproachful. But my eyes were busied to watch for Spaniards and to get the most out of our lazy craft so that I saw little of her, and Gilbert was her almost constant company, save when he was on duty, for now he had regained nearly all his strength, and, as we swung one morn into the eye of the sun to head into the Channel, he declared that the scent of the air smelled of gorse and heather and that his cure was complete.

At last we saw the gray form of the Lizard, the spur of England's knightly heel, rising and the spouting rocks of the Scilly Islands, and I flung up my cap and shouted for sheer joy. The cap went overboard, and I needed it. We had refitted ourselves with what we found aboard the galleon, but the Dons had not carried many changes of clothes, and the best we had was sea-whitened and sun-faded.

A beggar would have found little to give him delight in our wardrobe. I would fain have approached England with pennants flying and bands playing, with ourselves in brave attire, as we had started, but we e'en had to come in like the wanderer in rags who yet goes proudly, knowing in his kerchief there is wrapped a gem of great price.

Against the grain, we had forborne to flaunt the Red Cross of Saint George in the chance of meeting Spaniards, though, had we engaged, I would have gone down or blown up the ship beneath its symbol. Now Mordaunt made from the Dons' bunting a quilted banner that we hauled up to our masthead as we made Plymouth Sound. It snapped at its halyard proudly, and we bared our heads to it.

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And, oh, how good seemed the rise of English shores, the purple of the moorlands and the dark gray of the tors beyond—the gleam of cliffs! Plymouth with beautiful Mount Edgcumbe, tinged with early greening; Drake's Island, a lime-hoy coming out and her men looking wonderingly at us.

We were a sight for wonderment, indeed. The galleon was, to any sailor's eye, of Spanish rig and design. She lacked paint, the gilded scrollings of the poop were blistered; sea-grass showed at every sluggish roll of her to the crisp waves. The sails were stained and patched; the cannon green with verdigris, and we who stood upon the poop wore rusty, dented corselets that were well hidden beneath our beards. Withal, save for the maid, we were tanned as if stained with walnuts. Yet, with the flag above us, I had no thought but that all the world might know us Englishmen.

But watchful eyes ashore held their suspicions. From Drake's Island came a puff of smoke and the boom of a gun. From behind the Catwater came out a little galleon no larger than our own but which rode lightly, clipping the waves with firm precision, racing out to see what manner of sea-gypsy we might be. One forward gun she fired, and the shot went skipping to the side of us as a warning of what might come later.

We dipped the flag in salute, and Mordaunt discharged a larboard gun, and I brought us up into the wind, all hands tailing to the sheets to flat our canvas. There we lumped heavily while the other danced up, passed us, a bull voice yelling at us from the poop, came smartly into the wind behind us and lowered a boat.

Eh, but it was good to see the snappy tug of the oars as the brawny seamen urged the pinnance on! Neptune had like to bark his head off ere I got a good look at the man who sat in the stern-sheets and, as Neptune's barking went down wind to him, stood up for a better look.

It was Moone! Moone, with his round face shining and his great voice bellowing a welcome as he came aboard and like a great child fell blubbering into my arms and nigh knocked me down with the weight of him.

"Lad, lad!" he said. "Dost know that tomorrow I was to set to sea to search the Main and all the Gulf of Mexico for thee? Lord God of mariners, but this is a healing for sore eyes!"

His own roamed round the vessel before we haled him below, the while his husky seamen manned our ship for us.

The talk shuttled swiftly, as you may guess. And my first question was, what of Drake?

Moone's eyes twinkled.

"More respect, Trevennion. Sir Francis, an you please. Knighted at Deptford by the queen aboard the *Golden Hynde*. I got rarely drunk that day and remember little of the happenings save that there was a great feast aboard and the *Golden Hynde* is set aside as a monument and example for the rest of Britain."

"Where is he?" I demanded.

"Thou shalt see him later," Moone parried. "Meanwhile, I am sent to bring thee straight to the mayor of Plymouth."

His own ship had come up for orders ere this, and Moone had given them the tidings. Now she was well ahead of us, and, as we came up to the Catwater, I could see the wall crowded with a throng that huzzaed us so bravely that the sound topped the roar of cannon in our salute. Then came the sound of music, and I caught the glitter of soldiers forming. Aymayu's eyes gleamed.

"It would seem thou art of honor in your own land," she said to me, and I smiled back at her as she stood with Gilbert, casting wild-eyed glances at Moone's giant frame.

THE mayor of Plymouth met us. Not the sleek-bellied, velvet-clad merchant I expected but, behold! A man of stature no higher than my shoulders, though his own were far broader A smiling visage under crisp brown hair, broad-templed, wrinkled-browed, with welcoming eyes and firm, kindly mouth. A man who fairly cracked my ribs in a most undignified embrace for so great a worthy as the mayor of Plymouth. Drake himself! Sir Francis Drake, greeting us as from the dead! Sir Francis, wedded to his own sweet Bess of Devon, who hauled us all off to his house, Indians included, where my Lady Drake made much of us and bore the shrinking Aymayu away to garb her in a fashion that made her doubly fair when she came shyly blushing down again.

There was a feast for all with wine and British ale and British beef and pastries

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and puddings. A great rib for Neptune, who wore his doubloon collar, and, when we were stuffed, much talking, wherein Sir Francis, who had sailed round the wide world himself, made much of our adventures. Presently I slipped away to see to the safe vaulting of our gold and to visit my Uncle Zadik, whither Peter had already gone. I took from the ship the golden tablet of Aymayu that she, and Gilbert, too, might know just whence she came.

I MIGHT have been gone but overnight for all the difference in the great room with the stuffed beasts, the furnace and all the riddle-raddle of my uncle's business. Nor was he changed. He was stirring a crucible when I entered, with Peter already set at the bellows to the charcoal fire beneath it. He would not have known me, he said, had not Peter apprised him of my coming, and he looked askance at Neptune, who, for his part, with keener memory retreated to a corner till I coaxed him out again.

The philosopher's stone was as far off as ever, my uncle said, somewhat wearily. I had gold enough to satisfy all his desires but none to throw away on such a quest. It had been too hard earned. So I merely told him that we were rich and he should tell no more fortunes. Drake, it seemed, had acquainted him of the merit of the amulet, and Zadik's fame had risen, but I was not minded for him to be at the beck of any who would buy his time to hear a rigmarole. His eyes gleamed when he saw the graven plate, and he drove us from the room while he conned it. It was late ere he opened to us again and told the tale of Aymayu's parentage.

" 'Tis but a fragment and much worn," he said. "Yet I have pieced some and guessed at more. Thy maid comes from the Isle of Kretos (Crete), born of Vikings from the North, who raided and settled there awhile and, some generations later, found the old fever of adventure rife within them and so set out to round the coast of Africa. How they got to this Peru of yours, we can but surmise, save that they must have pioneered much of the trail that Drake has lately ended; but your maid is Norse or Danish, lad, and such blood as flows in her veins may well be in yours, as it is of many Englishmen."

This would be good news for the pair, I knew, but I would have left the taking of it until the next morning had not Angus come for me, and in his company I walked back to Drake's house.

"What wilt do with thyself now, lad?" asked Angus. "The queen's share of our booty must be delivered. Belike thou wilt take it up to London where they will make a courtier of thee?"

"Not I," I answered. "I had thought to get thee to be that messenger, Angus. I shall busy myself awhile restoring the house and estate of Trevennion and weaning mine uncle from some, at least, of his mysteries. Then? Why, what's wrong with building us a gallant, well-found ship of our own and off to the Main? Wilt sail with me?"

"It is the admiral's opinion," returned Angus—and it was good to hear the old term for Sir Francis—"that England will need all her fighting men to stay close along her coasts. There is talk of a great fleet of Spain preparing for the conquest of our land. And the time is not far off. So Drake believes, or he would not be lodged in Plymouth as its mayor, I'll warrant thee. Best talk with him."

"I will," I said.

In sooth I did not know just what to think on for the future. I was back home where I had longed to be, but the savor of it all was dead. I had lost myself. We walked on in silence, and I held the feel of Angus' keen glance on my face.

"I have good news for Gilbert and Aymayu," I said presently.

"Then thou must needs write Gilbert," replied Angus. "For he left post-haste for Southampton three hours back."

"For Southampton?"

"It seems there is a lass there to whom his heart is bound. Now that he returns rich, he may pay court to her with some hope of winning."

I stood stock-still. Gilbert and a maid—a maid who was not Aymayu?

"He said naught to me of this," I protested.

"Nor to me. He was not one to talk much of his own affairs. But I guessed it long ago."

"But Aymayu, Angus! What of Aymayu? This was not fair to her. What will the poor maid do?"

"It is barely possible that she may be comforted," said Angus, and there was a

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dry quality to his words that made me look closely at him. "Oh, lad, lad," he said in a father-chiding voice, "to be so ripe for love and yet so blind! Gilbert was to our maid no more than brother to sister. She needed company, and I was too old, alack—though I envy thee not your good hap—and thou, Trevennion, wert ever, so the maid fancied, too stern for aught smacking of frivolity or laughter; too cold for quickened heart-beats, save in battle; too blind to note the way she waited on thy glance, thy action and thy lightest word. She ever loved thee, lad, and feared thy stern aloofness."

Too cold? There had been times when I came near to hating Gilbert.

Too blind? I had been glad to confess to that fault. I had but feared I saw too plainly.

Too stern? I had been stern with myself. I had come to the brink of love when Aymayu kissed me on the lips, but that she had done because I had killed Reed who had killed Gilbert whom she loved!

Angus slid an arm about my shoulder. The laird seemed to read my thoughts.

"She never loved him that way, lad," he said. "Ask her thyself."

And, when we were come to the house, Lady Bess drew me aside and smiled at me in fashion that made me feel very young and small for all she was my own junior. She led me to the door of a room and motioned to me to open and enter.

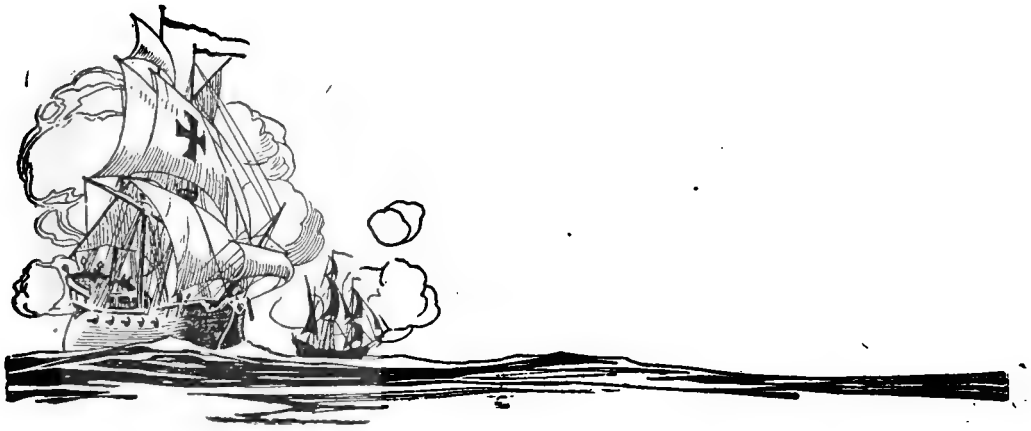
"Some one is waiting there for you," she said.

Standing in the candle-light was Aymayu, not Aymayu, the Priestess of the Sun, but Aymayu, the Norse maiden, a shy, sweet girl who looked at me with frightened eyes as if I were about to scold. She came up to me and set her hands in mine that went out to her.

"What are you going to do with me?" she said.

I told her.

THE END



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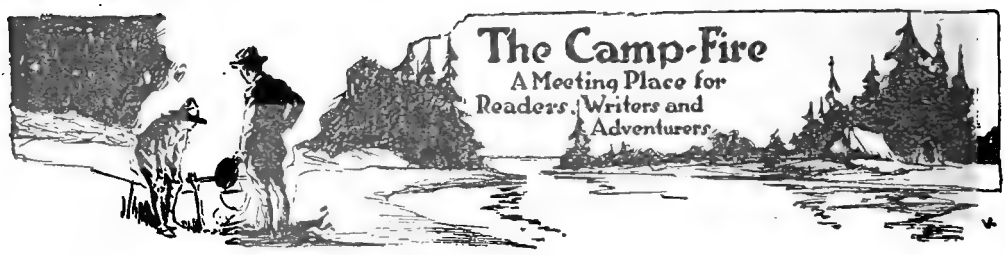

A LETTER from one of us who served in Palestine:

Birmingham, England.

Any mail happens to come for No. 7,847 please hold until called for or I send for it. I just arrived in England via France from Palestine. Was out there for the big rush last Fall and believe me it was a farce. But I think there were more men died of dysentery and malaria than were killed in France. The advance was so swift that the Medical Staff could not keep up with us; men were just lying down to die by the wayside.

And grub! It was scandalous. Biscuit and bully-beef, stewed dates or raisins, formed the menu; a quart of water a day to drink, wash and shave. It was worse than in the Philippines in the last insurrection.

I am off for Russia again as soon as I get my discharge from the outfit I am with at present. There is some chance of grub over there anyway, but things are rationed over here. It's impossible to get decent tobacco, and sugar is out of the way altogether.

My regards to Camp-Fire.—No. 7,847.

ON THE occasion of his first story in our magazine W. P. Lawson follows Camp-Fire custom by rising and introducing himself:

Morristown, N. J.

I don't at all mind entering the field of autobiography. Most of us have a sort of sneaking fondness for reminiscence, I think. Lots of things are funny after they are softened by years, which at the time they happened were considered anything but droll. On the other hand there is always the danger that a person who gets talking about himself may forget the fact that his history, if detailed at too great length, will not furnish to his audience the peculiarly intense joy its relation affords himself.

AS TO my own existence, I'll state briefly that after a few early years of school at Richmond, Va., I moved to Montclair, N. J., was graduated at the Montclair High School, went two years to Cornell and one to Columbia, and three years to New York Law School, with a year's reporting on the Evening *Sun* sandwiched in. After which a kindly disposed medical advisor prescribed a change of scene and I went West as a young man should.

I landed in Albuquerque, New Mex., and for a time essayed various local lines of effort, among which it may be sufficient to mention clerking, bookkeeping, ranch-cooking, cow-punching, vegetable peddling and mining. I also loafed considerably between jobs, which perhaps accounts for my versatility. I liked loafing best, largely on account of the fact that I appeared—to others as well as to myself—to be more proficient in that occupation than in anything else I attempted during that period.

FINALLY I got an appointment as Forest Guard, taking the Ranger examinations in the Fall of the same year. For several years thereafter I worked with the U. S. Forest Service in various States, but chiefly in New Mexico and Arizona.

My first real assignment in the Service was a six months' cruising and mapping expedition as one of a party of ten that covered the Black Range division of the Gila National Forest. We cruised during the season about 300 square miles of timberland and made in all some 31 camps, in rugged country varying in altitude from 7,000 to 12,000 feet.

IT WAS during this trip that chance, in the shape of our camp cook, led me to commit my first literary effort. The cook had a penchant for strong coffee. His method of obtaining it was to leave the coffee grounds in the pot all through the week, emptying them each Saturady night. He claimed that it stuck to a feller's ribs.

Very few of us attempted to test out the theory with proper thoroughness. You will perhaps recall the lady who asked her escort if oysters were healthy, and his reply that he didn't really know, but that he'd never heard them complain. In one respect we were like the oysters, because we didn't complain. Camp cooks are too hard to get. We just drank water instead of coffee.

Then we ran out of tobacco, and I quit smoking and coffying for some months. As a result I found that I could do a day's work and still feel energetic enough to want to sit up till ten or eleven each night.

So to fill the tedium I started writing a sort of glorified account of our trip, working in bed after supper by the light of a candle-stub stuck near the head of my sleeping bag. The result was "The Log of a Timber Cruiser," which later I found a publisher rash enough to bring out.

DURING that same reconnaissance I got together a good deal of material, worked up later into short stories. One of these is "The Hunting Party," the incidents and characters in which, by the way, are all based on actual events and persons.

I would like to say that that trip, and the following years in the service, were among the best I have known. And I'd like to say also that if at any time a member of the Camp-Fire is desirous of information concerning any phase of the Forest Service of the 183 National Forests, I'll be glad to give it to him or tell him where he can get it.—W. P. LAWSON.

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CLEARING UP FRONTIER HISTORY

"Wild Bill" Hickok and Others; The Custer Massacre

WE OF the Camp-Fire have been doing our bit for some time toward clearing up obscure points in the history of the Old West. Scattered here and there are men still living who themselves took part in the making of that history, and still more who are or have been in touch with the pioneers. Many have been members of our Camp-Fire from the start and our investigations into Western history are bringing more and more of them within our circle.

With some of you the study of those old days was already a hobby. These were already in touch with many original sources of information and for years had let no man or book escape if there were chance of further knowledge.

Take it all in all, we of the Camp-Fire are in position to perform a unique service and one of considerable value to the full and exact writing of our country's history.

THE following contributions by members of our Camp-Fire deal with Geronimo, Sitting Bull, Custer, Miles, Crook, and many others of the soldiers, Indians, scouts and pioneers who made Western history. The information is of various kinds and covers many points, but through all this particular bunch of letters runs mention of "Wild Bill" Hickok and for that reason they are given here together instead of having them a few at each Camp-Fire as has generally been our custom with letters pertaining to the Old West.

Let us begin with a letter from a comrade in Canada:

Victoria, B. C.

Coming over on the boat from the mainland one night I noticed a letter in the Camp-Fire wherein somebody wanted to know more about "Wild Bill" Hickok. I was born and brought up in the Black Hills and among some of my recollections are those of Wild Bill, and stories that I have heard of him. The following information may be of interest.

J. B. Hickok (Wild Bill) was born in 1837 in Illinois. When but a lad he worked as towpath driver on a canal and when still a young fellow he drifted West into Kansas. He served on the frontier as wagon-boss, pony-expressman and guide and scout. He was assassinated in Deadwood by a fellow named Jack McCaul. There is a monument erected to his memory in the cemetery on the hill overlooking Deadwood.—FRED T. EVANS.

So that none of the old-timers among us may begin saying to themselves "G. L. Chester? I don't remember any such scout back in the 80's," I'll state that this is not his real name but a sort of pen-name he types to his letters, writing his own name under it and using printed letterheads bearing his own name. I know him not only through correspondence but through others.

California.

Some time ago "The Ace" told of being possessed of a curio coming to him from Geronimo by way of Wild Bill Hickok. I have failed to hear any one give friend "Ace" the information he asks for and I take it for granted that the Geronimo he refers to is the late Apache chief of that name.

I saw Wild Bill a couple of times prior to his death in (I think) 1876, and had some unfinished business with Geronimo after his Huns had wiped out the family of my friend Meadows (Arizona Charlie).

While in the Southwest I never heard of Wild Bill being engaged in Arizona hunting Indians nor of Geronimo being out of that territory unless driven into New or Old Mexico, until nearly ten years after the death of Hickok when Geronimo was driven north and captured.

I can not be certain that Hickok was not engaged in scouting in the Southwest, but I did not hear him talked of among the other scouts as being there, although many were the tales told of him around the scouts' fire in 1883 and 1884 when I drew pay and sustenance from our Uncle but wore no uniform.

Geronimo was a "second string" chief long after Wild Bill was killed and did not become very (in)famous before 1880.

My candid opinion is that there was slight possibility of an exchange of trophies between Hickok and Geronimo.—G. L. CHESTER.

A letter from "Uncle Frank," Frank H. Huston, who was himself one of those who knew the Old West at first-hand and played a part in its making. I could not be sure of several words, so they are queried.

In Camp (at southern foot of Fremont's Pass, now known as Newhall's Grade).

Now then you tell the "Ace" that Bill Hickok never saw Geronimo, as latter was only a kid when Bill reigned and Bill never was in 'Pache country and Geronimo was war chief of the White Mountain Apaches. Old Billy, who was with Crawford when he was killed in Mexico, was a scout of Grant and also a White Mountain 'Pache. He sold me " 'Pache" a—(?) of a horse the only (?) in United States outside of old City Hall in San Francisco.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE killed Tom Custer. Geo. Custer killed himself rather than be captured, which they tried to do, and that is the reason his body was not stripped and mutilated, as no Injun will touch a suicide under any circumstances and they avoid the place where the act was committed.

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I never knew the 'Paches to war-dance, at least not like the plains Injuns, and the 'Paches are the most superstitious of all; as a French trooper in 4th Cavalry remarked in '84, they are the bravest cowards in existence.

Tell "Ace" to write Andy Mills, Wilcox, Arizona, who was in that country before the first (?) and hunted game for the posts. Andy has the leg-irons made for Billy the Kid when he did his first killing at Bonita three miles form Ft. Grant.—UNCLE FRANK.

Here is another interesting letter which the writer wants to appear over other than his real name, though he, too, signs his letter to me with his right name and writes on his regular printed letter-head. The principal reason, I judge, is a kind of ingrowing modesty about appearing in print. But talking at our Camp-Fire is different; no need of talking to us from 'way back in the shadows; why not come right up close to the blaze and talk where the rest of us can see as well as hear? However, that's their business, not mine, and though we'd rather have them use their own names we're glad to hear from them under whatever conditions their modesty imposes.

Iowa.

For the benefit of "Ace," would say that I have every reason to believe that "Wild Bill" never was in the country where Geronimo roamed. I can find no record of it in books. And as he was killed August 2, 1876, and the Geronimo trouble did not start till April, 1885, it is not likely that he took much part in that trouble. His true name was James Butler Hickok. He was born in May, 1837, in Illinois. He was the prince of all the border men, a wonderful shot, and the most coolly desperate man of them all. He was marshal of a number of "bad" towns, and while in that capacity killed a number of men. He was killed by a tinhorn gambler named Jack McCall, who was afterward hanged. I can obtain an original photograph of Wild Bill if the "Ace" should like one; they are very rare, and I do not know of any others.

Geronimo was a half-breed Mex. They chased him over 2,000 miles in 18 months, and when he surrendered he had only 22 bucks left. He was sent to Florida, then transferred to Ft. Sill, where he died a few years ago.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE was supposed to have killed Custer, but I have his personal word that if he did he was unaware of it. He acknowledged and gloated in the fact that he *had* killed Tom Custer, for he had sworn to not only kill him but "cut his heart out and eat it" (which he did) for ill-treatment received at his hands. Custer had just returned from Washington, where he had trouble with Secretary of War Belknap and President Grant. He had been reduced in rank, had his long hair cut off, and went into the fight with no insignia of rank, and wearing a buckskin jacket. He was not "the last man to fall," for a horse and several men fell on top of him, and it was not known at first what had become of him. He was not "the only man that was not scalped," for there were very few that were. The Indians could hear the firing of Reno, and went while the going was good.

HAD Custer lived he would have been court-martialed, for had he used the least precaution he would or could not have walked into the trap as he did. He was disliked by his men, for the reason he was always "playing to the grand-stand" and would sacrifice men for a little glory for himself. He had won a number of battles by dash and bravado, but the "pitcher went to the well" once too often.

That "Curly the Crow" stuff is half buncombe. He started with Custer all right, but was either sent back or flew the coop when the doings started. I read the other day where Curly said "Custer died in his arms." Oh, bubbles!

My authority for making such statements comes from such men as Buffalo Bill, Captain Jack Crawford, George Fritz (the first man on the field after the battle), Rain-in-the-Face, and others. I, like the "Ace," have reasons for not wishing to sign this with my proper name, so for a *nom de plume* just sign it—DIRTY DEUCE.

A copy of the above letter was sent by me to E. A. Brininstool, whose keen interest in the old West is known to all of us. Here is his reply:

Los Angeles, Calif.

I have yours of the 20th with letter from "The Dirty Deuce" relative to Wild Bill and Chief Geronimo. I agreed with him that Wild Bill had no part in the Apache campaigns, for I, too, never have seen anything in books or newspaper articles regarding Bill as having taken part in those campaigns.

I HAVE read every scrap I can get hold of regarding the Sioux campaign of '76 when Custer was killed, and, to sum it all up, nobody knows who killed him—and further, nobody knows for sure that it is his body that is buried at West Point. The consensus of opinion seems to be that he committed suicide at the last minute, as he was shot in the right temple and the bullet-hole was powder-marked, showing that a weapon must have been held very close to his head when fired. He was also shot in the side.

An entire book might easily be written about Custer's last fight, his getting "in bad" with President Grant just prior to the '76 campaign, together with other personal affairs in which the public probably is not interested. There is no question about Custer not being liked by a great many of his men, at least. I have had that right from reliable sources. His fight with old Black Kettle's band on the Washita is well known to have amounted to about a massacre itself, and on a close par to the disgraceful Chivington massacre in Colorado—one of the most disgraceful acts ever committed, when the Indians were right under the protection of Fort Lyons and flying the peace flag.

I have been all over the Custer battlefield in company with "Curley," the Crow scout who was with the Custer command on that fatal 25th of June. I believe his story just as he tells it—that he

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escaped from the battlefield in the smoke, dust and general confusion by disguising himself as a Sioux, and made his way down to where the supply steamer *Far West* in charge of Capt. Grant Marsh was awaiting further orders, near the mouth of the Big Horn River. "Curley," when I saw him in 1913, was 56 years old, and I took his photograph in front of his little log cabin on the banks of the Little Big Horn and bought the buckskin coat he had on his back at that time.

THERE is no doubt at all about Custer having disobeyed his orders regarding the time he was to meet with Terry and Gibbon. At a conference aboard the *Far West* the night before Custer started on his scout, he was told to "not be greedy but wait for the rest of us." To which he is said to have answered, "I will." Instead of making a leisurely march which would bring him into the valley of the Little Big Horn on June 26th, he made a forced march, part of it in the night, arriving in sight of the Indian village on the morning of the 25th. His men were weary and so were his horses. However, he divided his forces into three detachments under himself, Major Marcus Reno and Capt. F. W. Benteen. Custer was to attack the village at the lower end, and Reno at the upper end, with Benteen under orders to "pitch into anything he came across." Reno was told that "the whole outfit will support you."

Reno charged the upper end of the big village, but instead of pressing his attack—right at the time when he had the Indians completely flabbergasted, so say their own chiefs—he retreated into a patch of timber and dismounted his men. Here, to make a short story, they became demoralized and a retreat was begun which ended in a genuine stampede. Here fell Charley Reynolds ("Lonesome Charlie"), one of the greatest scouts the Western frontier ever knew—quiet, modest, unassuming, but with a reputation as a mighty hunter and a wonderful plainsman. "Bloody Knife," Custer's favorite 'Ree scout also was killed here. Reno simply lost his head and went "while the going was good."

HAD Custer won this fight, it certainly would have been a big feather in his cap, and personally I believe that is just the way he had it all figured. There are a great many "ifs" in this Custer affair, but, boiled right down, neither Custer, Terry nor Gibbon had any idea at all of the immense number of warriors the former was attacking. His highest estimate, the previous night, in a council with his scouts, was 800 fighting men, while as a matter of fact there were between 2,500 and 3,000—some say even more. The entire village is said to have been the greatest assemblage of Indians ever gathered together on the American continent, and numbered, including men, women, children and old men too feeble to fight, over 15,000; therefore 2,500 is a very conservative estimate, counting all boys of 15 as fighters.

I HAVE seen paintings and pictures of the Custer fight showing the General in the center of a little fighting band, with his long yellow hair flying in the wind, wielding a saber. There was not a saber in the entire command on this campaign. They were all left behind at Fort Abraham Lincoln—in Custer's column, at least. Neither did he wear his hair long at this time. He formerly had done this at different times, but had it cut short just before starting on what proved to be his last battle. It is not correct to refer to the Custer fight as a "massacre," for it was nothing of the sort. It was a straight up-and-down fight to the finish, in which the troops were simply overwhelmed by vastly superior numbers, vastly better armed in every way than were the Seventh Cavalry. One of the reasons given for the defeat of the troops has been the fact that their Springfield carbines, single-shot weapons, had poor cartridge-extractors and the men were often obliged to open a knife and dig out the fired shell before they could reload. The Indians were armed—great numbers of them, anyway—with Henry and Winchester repeaters of the first model made, firing 16 shots without reloading.

Custer was not scalped nor mutilated. Neither was Capt. Myles Keogh—the latter from the asserted fact that he wore an Agnus Dei on his breast which the Indians respected as "big medicine." I have heard that a very few others were not mutilated, but most of them were.

BY ALL odds, the best account of the Custer fight is the one written by Gen. (then Captain) E. S. Godfrey, now living at Cookstown, N. J. He was with the Reno division. This article appeared in the *Century* for January, 1892. The next best is that of Major James McLaughlin, for years Indian Agent at Standing Rock reservation, who knew, personally and with much friendship, every chief who led in the Custer attack, including Chief Gall, Crazy Horse, Crow King, Two Moons and others. His story is contained in his book "My Friend the Indian." McLaughlin had the very best chance in the world to "get the inside" of the fight, and, as there was no white man's side to it, we must depend very largely on what the Sioux and Cheyenne leaders have to say.

Reno was besieged in the hills four miles from where Custer met his death. He was too badly "rattled" to make an attempt to assist Custer, although begged to try by his captains and lieutenants. The real fate of Custer and his men was not known until the afternoon of June 26, when Terry's and Gibbons'-detachments arrived. The Indians retreated as soon as the dust-clouds announcing the arrival of reinforcements were seen. Most of them under Sitting Bull—who had no part at all in the fight, contrary to all statements that he did—fled across the line into Canada, and remained there five years.

I have Rain-in-the-Face's personal story of his part in the fight, which was printed in *Outdoor Life* some years ago.—E. A. BRININSTOOL.

Los Angeles.

It may be well to print a verbatim copy of Custer's orders from Terry when the command left the steamer *Far West* a few days prior to the battle. The question is—did Custer disobey these orders or not? Most historians contend that he did. Anyway, here is a copy of these orders, taken from a life of Custer:

LIEUT.-COL. CUSTER,
Seventh Cavalry.

COLONEL:—The Brigadier-General commanding directs that as soon as your regiment can be made ready for the march you proceed up the Rosebud

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in pursuit of the Indians whose trail was discovered by Major Reno a few days since. It is, of course, impossible to give any definite instructions in regard to this movement, and, were it not impossible to do so, the department commander places too much confidence in your zeal, energy and ability to wish to impose upon you precise orders which might hamper your action when nearly in contact with the enemy. He will, however, indicate to you his own views of what your action should be, and he desires that you should conform to them unless you shall see sufficient reason for departing from them. He thinks that you should proceed up the Rosebud until you ascertain definitely the direction in which the trail above spoken of leads. Should it be found, as it appears to be certain that it will be found, to turn toward the Little Big Horn, he thinks that you should still proceed southward, perhaps as far as the headwaters of the Tongue, and then turn toward the Little Big Horn, feeling constantly, however, to your left so as to preclude the possibility of the escape of the Indians to the south or southeast by passing around your left flank. The column of Col. Gibbon is now in motion for the mouth of the Big Horn. As soon as it reaches that point it will cross the Yellowstone and move up at least as far as the parks of the Big and Little Big Horn. Of course its future movements must be controlled by circumstances as they arise; but it is hoped that the Indians, if upon the Little Big Horn, may be so nearly enclosed by two columns that their escape will be impossible. The department commander desires that on your way up the Rosebud you should thoroughly examine the upper part of Tulloch's Creek, and that you should endeavor to send a scout through to Col. Gibbon's column with information as to the result of your examination. The lower part of this creek will be examined by a detachment from Col. Gibbon's command. The supply steamer (*Far West*) will be pushed up the Big Horn as far as the forks of the river are found to be navigable for that space, and the department commander, who will accompany the column of Col. Gibbon, desires you to report to him there not later than the expiration of the time for which your troops are rationed, unless in the meantime you receive further orders.

Respectfully, etc.,

E. W. Smith, Captain 18th Infantry,
Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

FOR one thing Custer did not examine Tulloch's Creek, nor send the scout (George Herendeen), lent to him by Terry for that purpose, back with a report. Herendeen was with Lieut. De Rudio when the latter, with Bill Jackson, a scout, and Tom O'Neil, were left in the river bottom at Reno's flight and made a most marvelous escape—worthy a story in itself. There are many other points to be considered which have no time to discuss. Custer *knew* Terry would not arrive until the 26th and was told to "wait for us." History shows how he "waited."—E. A. Brininstool.

The next letter deals Wild Bill's reputation a body-blow. And the writer gives us another case of "pen-name," exactly like the two others—printed letter-head and signature both giving his real name.

Springfield, Missouri.

Concerning one Bill Hickok, a left-over product of the Civil War more widely known as Wild Bill.

It is evident that "Ace" holds this man in some esteem, but I fear that much I have to say will shake it. In this town of Springfield, and during the latter part of the Civil War and for some years after, Wild Bill was best known, and it is here that he began to establish his reputation as a bad man.

IF EVER Wild Bill was an Indian scout none of his old-time intimates here know of it. For a time during the war he was attached to the Union forces as a scout, but his propensity to shoot up saloons and bully inoffensive citizens and to otherwise advertise himself rendered him useless as a scout. The duties of a scout required a quiet, stealthy and alert life; a man seeking such notoriety as did Wild Bill could not fulfil the duties of a scout. Because of this his employment by the Army officers was rare, as they only used him as a last resort.

The close of the Civil War left at Springfield much of the flotsam and jetsam that had been its natural attributes. In that day this country was a frontier country and all along its line similar characters were left adrift and had no mind to turn their swords into plowshares. It was of this class that Wild Bill came. He was merely a product of the war in a locality more or less lawless, where prejudices ran high for a period following the close of the war.

IF "ACE' will look a bit into history he will find that in 1876 Geronimo, the Apache chief, went with other chiefs into Mexico and did not return until 1882. Therefore, if Wild Bill ever came into contact with Geronimo it had to be at a time previous to 1876.

The reputation of a bad man is highest where he is least known. Wild Bill was known as a brave man only where he was unknown, or at places along his orbit where he flashed in and out like a shooting star. There are those now living in this community, survivors of those turbulent days, who will testify that aside from his long hair, his ability to shoot straight and to ride well there was nothing to Wild Bill.

FROM the beginning of 1864 until about 1876 Wild Bill made his principal headquarters in this town. In 1864 he shot a man on the public square in Springfield. The man he shot was an ex-Confederate, or, rather, was a rebel sympathizer. Prejudice against such men served to shield any Union man who oppressed them. Wild Bill was tried for murder, but his trial was but little short of a farce. As is often so nowadays, the facts of the case were one thing and the evidence at the trial quite another. The want of space forbids the detailed account of that incident, but I will be glad to furnish "Ace" with all the details, warning him that his idol will be shattered.

AFTER his acquittal Will Bill lingered for several years around Springfield engaged in horse-racing, gambling and kindred diversions. He had a pleasant way of riding his horse into our saloons, shooting up the place and otherwise adding to his reputation as a bad man. It was observed, however, that he used great discrimination in his

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selection of saloons for this purpose. This was no doubt due to a mishap that occurred to him when he attempted to perform in the saloon of a man named Philidor (but better known as Phil Dor). It was Philidor who slapped Wild Bill first on one cheek and then on the other; then turned his back and dared him to shoot. There are other instances similar to this, well known in Springfield but never given sufficient importance to be particularly noticed.

ABOUT this time the services of bad men were badly needed in some of the towns in the cattle country. Wild Bill's reputation had extended into that zone, and he was selected to be the marshal of one or two of those towns. It will be recalled by old-timers that he did not live up to his reputation, and moved on. He drifted back to Springfield and married a widow of a circus man named Lake, whose husband was murdered in the mining camp at Granby. He sought as he had been seeking for some time, a sort of affiliation with Buffalo Bill, whose appearance and mannerisms he sought to affect. But Buffalo Bill had the power of discriminating between real bad men and bogus bad men, and consequently Wild Bill Hickok was left to wrestle with his own reputation.

WILD BILL killed many men, but he usually had the drop. He had the drop on a cowboy named McCall and killed him. The avenging brother of McCall followed him to Deadwood and there shot him much after the fashion that Wild Bill had shot his brother. Wild Bill's death occurred several years before Geronimo ever returned to the United States. As a small boy I frequently saw Wild Bill and he was a hero in my eyes. His knack of putting two holes into a tin can by the wayside while riding at full speed with a derringer in each hand would inspire any youth of that period with infinite awe. But this idol was shattered for me, as he surely will be for "Ace," when the truth was known.

Since "Ace" withholds his name I will do likewise, and you may subscribe the name of "Deuce" to this letter. My real name appears upon my letter-head.—DEUCE.

It is difficult to reconcile the above letter with the others, but it makes the case of Wild Bill all the more interesting. In a letter to E. A. Brininstool I mentioned briefly that I'd had a letter painting Hickok as a four-flusher. He replied:

Don't you ever believe it. I know many men (Clark Stocking among others) who were intimate with him in Deadwood and Kansas frontier towns and who *know* he was the real thing and not a four-flusher.

Mr. Brininstool, however, had not seen the letter in question. It's hard to trace the path of truth in such matters, no matter how honest and sincere the reporters. Perhaps, since all men are both good and bad, both strong and weak, the facts lie on both sides of the line.

Our older comrades will remember "Wild Bill in Deadwood Gulch" in our July, 1916, issue, in which Robert V. Carr told us, in semi-story form, of the death of Hickok. Here is the letter that accompanied the manuscript when it came to us:

Gray, California.

The story of "Wild Bill in Deadwood Gulch" is, in all main points, as I got it from Doc Peirce. Doc told me several little side yarns, however, which I did not include in the story of Wild Bill.

FOR example, Doc mentioned the Mexican and the Indian head. About the time Wild Bill was killed a Mexican came riding up the main street of Deadwood, shouting and whooping, the while he swung a gory Indian head. As there was a bounty on Indian heads, the miners paid the Mexican for his trouble. Later it developed that the Mexican had not killed the Indian, but that the red brother had been shot by a white man. Doc said that some thoughtful Deadwooder later downed the Mexican on general principles, but largely for passing off a second-hand Indian head on the camp.

AS NEAR as I can ascertain from the various accounts given me by old-timers, the story of the killing of Wild Bill is correct in all details with one exception. I have never been able to learn positively whether Jack McCall was in that game of poker in which Wild Bill drew the black card or not. Doc says that McCall was in the game, but left after a hand or two and re-entered the saloon through the back door. I think Doc's account is correct, as it is reasonable to suppose that McCall must have been posted on the position of Wild Bill at the table. Other old-timers of Deadwood have told me the same thing. I recall Otto Uhlig. Uhlig was working on a hillside when the cry, "Wild Bill is killed!" came to his ears. Uhlig told me that McCall had been in the game with Bill a few moments prior to the murder.

I BANK a great deal on Doc Peirce's accuracy. Doc has a great memory, and has the history of the early days in the Black Hills down pat. A great many old-timers get things twisted after thirty-five or forty years, but Doc Peirce is not of that type. He can recall a man's gestures after forty years, and never forgets an expression. If you ever get out to the Black Hills—and, by the way it is the most beautiful spot in the United States—drop into Hot Springs and look up Doc Peirce. Like enough you'll find him at the post-office looking for his copy of the *Sioux City Journal*. He's a good old scout, and as full of humor as an orange is of juice.

AS FOR the motive back of the killing, I had so many stories regarding that point that I concluded to let it rest on what Doc told me McCall said at the trial in Deadwood, and Doc's conclusions regarding those remarks. There is no doubt that McCall killed Wild Bill just for the sake of being pointed out as the man who turned the trick. And there is no doubt but that, as Doc says, the lawless element of Deadwood encouraged Jack in that ambition.

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ALL the characters in the story are true characters.

Preacher Smith was well known in the Black Hills, and was wont to hold forth on a soap-box in the street and give the miners samples of the old-time shouting religion.

Doc tells a story of a chap who had tried every game in Deadwood—and there were many kinds in those days—and lost. Presently he came to Preacher Smith, who was holding forth in his usual arm-waving, shouting fashion.

Thinking the parson was running a game of chance, the eager gambler broke through the circle and offered to try the preacher's game.

"Salvation is free," the parson informed him.

"Well," came the instant reply, trimmed with a string of flesh-colored adjectives, "if salvation's free, it's the only thing in this rippety-slam camp that is, by and so forth!"

Then he proceeded to take up a collection, placing therein his last piece of money, for the heart of the nameless chance-taker was in the right place.

AS A last word, I do not want you to take the story of Wild Bill as a report. The facts are there, but I have attempted to make a story of it. With the valuable aid of Doc Peirce—indeed, without his aid I could not have written the story—I have tried to give you a picture of the famous warrior as he went his way up and down the streets of Deadwood, or, rather, the clearings and trails that were in time to know pavements and the jangle of the trolley-car.

SOME of these days I am going to get Doc to tell me about Calamity Jane.

The last time I saw Jane was in the shop of Mac, the Saddler, in Deadwood. The old girl was about at the end of her string. She had left an old hat in Mac's place, and was worried about the set of a feather on that same decrepit lid—the eternal feminine. Also, she wanted a little money. MacDonald and I 'came through" with a little change. I could scarcely believe that the shabby old woman, husky with the bad whisky huskiness, sick and broken, was the famed Calamity, she of the buckskins, profanity and reckless ways.

"But," said Mac, the Saddler, a little sadly, "this is Jane."

My great regret is that I did not live in those red days. Deadwood was in full blast before I was born. I only caught the echoes of the shouts of the gold-seekers, although I did live some of the cowboy life.

But it's all gone now. Deadwood is a sedate town, with clubs and the moral uplift. And few of the old-timers remain. Every letter Doc Peirce writes me is a sort of an obituary.—ROBERT V CARR.

Next, a very interesting letter from an old Regular who saw frontier service in Geronimo's day. Will any other former members of the old 4th or 6th Cavalry or the old 13th Infantry tell us more about the taking of Geronimo?

I am an "Old Regular Army Man." I was in New Mexico when Geronimo appeared on the scene in 1883, but did not assist in his capture, as my term of enlistment (five years) expired in July, 1884. However, my old company assisted in capturing him in Mexico in 1885. After his capture Geronimo was sent to Florida, then to Mt. Vernon Barracks, Alabama, and after was eight years transferred to Oklahoma, where he died. An old comrade of mine remained in the Army until he was brought up from Porto Rico on that "Pest Ship" *Relief* during Spanish War and died on Bedloe's Island from starvation and dysentery. This comrade told me of hardships undergone in chasing after Geronimo and incidentally mentioned that I was lucky in escaping that terrible march over the lava beds.

I WAS sent to New Mexico in 1880 from Mt. Vernon Barracks, Ala., to help 9th U. S. Cavalry (colored) protect the people from Apache raids. The last Apache raids were from 1880 to 1885—Victorio in 1880; Nana, 1881; Juh, 1882; Geronimo, 1883 to 1885.

The scouts used against Apaches were regularly enlisted Indians—enlisted for six months and led by West Point officers. Those Indian scouts received pay and allowances of Regular Army soldiers but wore their own clothing and lived by themselves as they had been accustomed to. I never heard of scouts of the Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill variety being used to round up Apaches.

ALTHOUGH living in New Mexico I never heard of Geronimo before Victorio, Nana and Juh were put out of business. Victorio killed about four hundred men, women and children on his raid in '80 and '81 and quite a few "Buffalo Soldiers" as he called the members of the 9th Cavalry.

I feel certain Geronimo's record never equaled Victorio's. Vic, Nana and Juh were first started on their raids by white men of New Mexico. I never heard who started Geronimo. I do know that, when he started, the whites were incensed at our inability to protect them from Apache raids. General Crook was sent to take command and see what he could do with the Apache. Three times he induced Geronimo to come in under a flag of truce, but, as General Crook could not give his word that the lives of himself and band would be safeguarded, Geronimo refused to surrender—preferred to die in the hills, fighting. Washington had given orders to capture Geronimo dead or alive.

WHEN General Crook came to New Mexico the citizens claimed they would make him President of U. S. Because he let Geronimo go and respected the flag of truce they had pull enough to have him transferred to Leavenworth, Kansas, and his transfer took place before I received my discharge.

General Miles captured Geronimo, but I have always been under the impression that he disregarded the "dead or alive" order.

THE Apache was the finest skirmisher this world ever produced. They could go up a mountain in fifteen minutes that it would take any white man two hours to climb. They could live a week on an oil rag. Had a splendid system of signalling by smoke and broken pieces of mirror or looking-glass. A soldier rarely saw an Apache, but felt the effects of a couple of volleys, though when the soldier got where the smoke had been Mr. Apache had melted into thin air.

Even today I have great respect for the Apache

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and would rather face one hundred Germans than one of them. If you could get in touch with any old members of the 4th and 6th Cavalry and 13th Infantry they could give fuller information of the chase after Geronimo. The 9th Cavalry suffered most under Victorio and Nana. They were sent out of the Territory and the 4th Cavalry relieved them afterward; 4th Cavalry was relieved by 6th Cavalry; 13th Infantry served with the three outfits. Cavalry did the chasing. Infantry guarded water-holes.

IN REGARD to "Wild Bill" I can only quote newspaper accounts. Some time about 1875 or 1876 "Wild Bill" came East as far as Rochester, N. Y., with a troupe of Indians, cowboys, etc. The first Wild West Show in the East. I saw the show in Albany, N. Y. It was called "Scouts of the Prairie," "Ned Buntline" (Judson) the author and principal character in the play. Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack were stars. Wild Bill was a U. S. scout when "Judson" brought him East. At Rochester the Government recalled him. He left the "show" and went back West.

I AM under impression it was a year or two later that he was killed at a gambling table. An enemy of his had been trailing him for a couple of years for revenge. He shot Hickok in back of head, killing him instantly. Escaped, captured after a year or so, tried and hung. The exact places of Bill's death and his murderer's trial and execution have slipped my memory. All papers in U. S. published the murder of Wild Bill, as Judson had brought him to public notice along with Cody and Texas Jack. Look up newspapers of the late seventies, or, if he was a U. S. scout when killed, write to Adjutant-General, U. S. A., Washington, D. C., and the date of his death will be sent to you. Geronimo and Wild Bill never saw each other. Bill was dead before Geronimo appeared on the horizon.

SCOUTS like Buffalo Bill, Buffalo Chips, Wild Bill and, in 1871, Kit Carson, whom I saw in Albany, N. Y., were used against Indians like Sioux, Utes, etc. Those Indians stood up and fought, the Apache was never seen but often felt and he appeared on the scene when you thought him one hundred miles away. Dana of N. Y. *Sun* published an editorial while I was in New Mexico stating that it cost the U. S. Government one million dollars to kill one Apache. As he had been the Secretary of War and as I know how difficult it was to catch one or even see one, I agreed with him.

THIRTY years ago the good people of the U. S. had no earthly use for an enlisted man of the U. S. A., and the citizens of New Mexico and Arizona had still less use for us. Get your Congressman to hunt up and send you the debates on bill to raise cowboy regiments to police those territories and remove the Regulars. When I get thinking of my Army experience I am apt to wander into many side trails.

FOR thirty-one years I have been a professional nurse and for eighteen years connected with a nurses' home and registry and would be pleased to have you keep my name and address out of magazine. You can convey this information to "The Ace" in any manner you think best and if he desires to communicate with me by letter I would be pleased to hear from him. There are four members of my family who are ex-Regulars and the four of us are sorry we can not answer the "Call to the Colors."

The authenticity of value of that tom-tom can be easily verified by finding out when Wild Bill was murdered and then comparing it with time when Geronimo was first heard of, 1883.— ————.

P. S.—Newspapers stated Rain-in-the-Face was the man who killed General Custer. As only a solitary Crow Indian escaped from the battle-field, the only evidence that he killed Custer was his own word that he did.

Though I can see no reason therefor (except in the case we've just heard), I think we've never had a discussion at Camp-Fire in which so many withheld their own names. However, we're more than glad to hear the things they tell us, leaving the method to them, though there's no cause for bashfulness when one of us speaks up at our Camp-Fire.

Here's an interesting side-light on Wild Bill. And, if Joe Beal and W. S. Harvey are among us, won't they tell us their tales of the old days?

New Kensington, Pa.

The following may be and may not be true, but I received it from a U. S. A. surgeon by the name of Albert Barnes. This was twenty-five years ago and he was an old man at that time and I suppose him dead now. At that time he had a son practising medicine in Indianapolis, and a son by the name of Albert, first lieutenant in the U. S. I.

WILD BILL had an arrow wound in one of his hips and it would not heal and he couldn't get along with it in this condition so he came to Chicago. Arriving there some time in the night, he went to this surgeon and told him that he wanted an examination of the hip, which he made, and told Bill that the bone was affected and would have to be scraped. Bill asked how it would have to be done; he told him. Bill told him he had no time to go to a hospital and asked him if he could perform the operation. He told him he could but he had no one to hold the light and no one to give the anesthetic. Bill replied that he did not need an anesthetic and that he would hold the lamp. The surgeon saw he would have to do something to satisfy him, so he got him on the operating-table, gave Bill the light to hold in a certain position, and commenced to operate.

He made the incision and scraped the bone and fixed everything O. K. Bill got up, walked to the depot, took the first train for the West, and this was the last he ever saw of him.

He told me that in all his practise it was the only man he ever saw that had no nerves or no feeling of pain.

THERE are two men living at Belle Vernon, Pa., who were with Custer for five years. They were with him at the Battle of the Wichita. One of them, Joe Beal, killed the Chief Black Kettle,

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and took from his body a medal which he has in his possession today. The other is W. S. Harvey. By writing these men you might get a whole lot of information.— ———— ————.

This comrade, who went to the Western frontier forty-six years ago, gives us the following:

Charlottesville, Va.

There have been many mistakes about the Custer massacre.

Reno was not dismissed for the reasons given by a writer. The record of his court-martial will show that. I knew several who fell with Custer. I knew Lieutenant Harrington well, and doubt the story of his suicide. For his relatives spent much time and money trying to find our his fate. If the suicide story was true, it would have been learned at that time. Search was made not only in our country but amongst the Indians across the border in Canada. His was the only officer's body not found. It is believed that he was shot crossing the creek, and his body fell in the water.—"VIELHO."

HERE are the results of the readers' vote on the ten most popular stories in *Adventure* during 1918. As in previous years, we give also the ten ranking next in the vote. (S) stands for "serial," (N) for complete "novel," (n) for complete novelette, those unmarked being short stories.

Of course a vote of this kind is only a partial expression, being cast by only a minority of the total number of readers, but nevertheless it is both interesting and decidedly useful in helping us in the office fill the magazine with the kinds of story our readers like best.

The vote on the relative value of fiction and the various departments was so scattering that we have not tabulated the results. "Camp-Fire" ran very strong, with "Ask Adventure" a good second. But no formal vote was needed to show that "Camp-Fire" is a favorite.

1.	GABOREAU THE TERRIBLE (S), *Gordon Young*	6,237
2.	HIDDEN TRAILS (S), *William Patterson White*	6,111
3.	GABOREAU (N), *Gordon Young*	6,090
4.	ALIAS WHISPERING WHITE, *W. C. Tuttle*	4,956
5.	HIGH POCKETS (n), *William Patterson White*	4,788
6.	THE MIGHTY MANSLAYER (n), *H. A. Lamb*	4,200
7.	THE SURVIVOR (N), *Robert V. Carr*	3,885
8.	ALAMUT (n), *H. A. Lamb*	3,360
9.	THE BELLS OF SAN JUAN (S), *Jackson Gregory*	3,255
10.	021 (n), *Wilbur Hall and Cecil Haig*	2,919
11.	WITH SHARP SWORD-EDGES (S), *Farnham Bishop and Arthur G. Brodeur*	2,772
12.	BEFORE MARQUETTE, (S) *Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton*	5,262
13.	TURQUOISE CANON (N), *J. Allan Dunn*	2,499
41.	THE SIGN OF THE SKULL (N), *J. Allan Dunn*	2,247
15.	GHOST ISLAND (N), *Courtney Ryley Cooper*	2,226
16.	THE HOUSE OF HIDDEN FACES (n), *H. A. Lamb*	2,016
17.	CHAPLAIN TO THE BUCCANEERS (N), *Stephen Chalmers*	1,890
18.	THE RAVEN MOCKER, *Hugh Pendexter*	1,848
19.	MAN TO MAN (n), *A. D. H. Smith*	1,785
20.	AMBUSH (N), *Samuel Alexander White*	1,596

Because shorter stories labor under a disadvantage in a vote of this kind, those under 20,000 words are listed separately, those under 10,000 being marked with a *.

STORIES UNDER 20,000 WORDS

1.	*ALIAS WHISPERING WHITE, *W. C. Tuttle*	4,956
2.	*THE RAVEN MOCKER, *Hugh Pendexter*	1,848
3.	*SIRGARKH RUBIES, *Arthur James Hayes*	1,470
4.	TAL TAULAI KHAN, *H. A. Lamb*	1,365
5.	*THE GOOSEYOKE RETURNS A CALL, *E. E. Harriman*	1,209
6.	*MAKING GOOD FOR MULEY, *W. C. Tuttle*	1,155
7.	*BLAZE, *Warren H. Miller*	1,092
8.	OAKES RESPECTS AN ADVERSARY, *Talbot Mundy*	1,071
9.	MISTER CASSIDY, *David Douglas*	1,050
10.	*SALT OF THE EARTH, *W. C. Tuttle*	1,008
11.	*BLOOD MONEY, *William Dudley Pelley*	987
12.	WOLF'S WAR, *H. A. Lamb*	946
13.	*THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE, *W. C. Tuttle*	945
14.	HIP SHOOTIN', *Earl Ennis*	904
15.	*THE WAYS OF MOUNTAIN MEN, *Hugh Pendexter*	903
16.	THE COLOR OF HER SOUL, *S. B. H. Hurst*	883
17.	*MR. HOBBS, *Hugh S. Miller*	882
18.	*LOCO OR LOVE, *W. C. Tuttle*	861
19.	*TIED UP FOR TOMBSTONE, *W. C. Tuttle*	840
20.	A LEADER OF MEN, W. *Townend*	777

Bear in mind the coming vote on this year's stories and be marking down your favorites as you go along.

Camp-Fire buttons now ready; 25c covers button and postage.

MANY letters come in from our comrades with the Army of Occupation and I wish we had space for all of them. Also that those used could see print in less than two or three months after their receipt. Anyhow here's one from Sergeant Albert J. Cook of the Engineers, with news of various other comrades. The shell-tags arrived O. K.—the first any of us here had seen.

We are planted up here on the Luxemburg border and wearing our young lives out trying to find something more interesting to do than squads right and left. The 6th Corps is now composed of the 5th, 7th and 33rd Divisions, the 5th occupying the lower half of Luxemburg, the 33rd the upper half and the 7th lying along the Moselle River near Pont-à-Mousson, in reserve. The only excitement left is the destroying and detonating of the German gas and H. E. shells which number hundreds of thousands, many of them so deteriorated by the weather and electrolysis that a person can't even wink at one of them. However, they are being rapidly put out of the way and soon will be off our hands.

HAVE heard from quite a few of the Army and Navy Club boys. Ben Praeger, old-timer of the insurrection, Mexico, and stopped five M. G. bullets at the crossing of the Vesle which same was stopping his company's advance. He was top-sergeant so he put the whole outfit of boche out of business with his automatic after he went down; and his company leap-frogged over him. He pulled out of the hospital in time to take up the white man's burden on the lower edge of the Argonne at Dommartin and Fresnes, where his division, the

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28th, fought like the —— till 11 A. M., November eleventh.

Bob Woodside, formerly treasurer of the club and now Captain of Co. M., 38th Inf., the hardest boiled regiment in the line and called by the French the "Rock of the Marne," got three or four punches in the anatomy at Montfaucon but up to armistice day was getting along fine. Bob was with the "Fighting Tenth" in the Philippines during the battle of Manilla and is the idol of every soldier in Pennsylvania. Buck Stehle, sergeant in the 122nd F. A., was bumped across the brow with a chunk of shrapnel while his battery was supporting the 1st Division in front of Montsec.

Have heard from quite a few of the other fellows and, so far, no report of casualties, so, if things break the same way we are hoping the old gang will still foregather in the club-rooms before long and there will sure be some barrage put up—minus the festive and alluring cocktail and the amber brew that made Milwaukee famous. Say, it will be rather hard for us hellions to sit around the big table and order some soft drink that we can't even pronounce. I suppose we'll have to move the club to Nogales or Naco on the Border.

SOME of the fellows have written me about organizing a platoon to volunteer if we go up into Russia, so I suppose if we do go it may be some time before we are back to the States. It's getting rather monotonous over here with no action at all except slinging a rifle around and worrying about a leave of absence to Paris. Went down myself for three days the other day and it felt good to see the old town again and feel real cobbles under my feet and see the white lights.

Am sending you some of the tags the Boche tied to their gas shells. On account of shape of tags they could tell in the dark what kind they were; also a little chart of Army Corps and Divisions, several Insignia that might help you out along Broadway.—SERGT. ALBERT J. COOK.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

THE series of talks that has been running in this Department reaches its conclusion in this issue. The plan of action is here given. The action itself lies with you.

The New Creed For Americans

I BELIEVE in the following principles and platform and believe that the need of their being put into operation in the United States of America is so vital and so acute that I hereby pledge my support to that work. Realizing the necessity of united effort, that effort can be united only by centering it upon main principles, and that in any democratic effort individuals must be willing to yield on minor points for the sake of the main needs of the majority, I waive any difference of opinion on minor details and accept them as necessary parts of a necessary whole.

I BELIEVE that the progress of democracy has reached a crisis. The social upheaval following the war is due to mankind's demand for a real democracy in which the people themselves shall really determine their own conditions and destinies. We, like the other nations, have not yet attained such democracy, except in imperfect theory incompletely carried out.

The world must progress, and democracy with it. The present social upheaval is so deep-rooted, widespread and determined that present institutions must be modified or risk being violently swept away. The avalanche of change is only half-way down the hill. If the lawful path of democratic methods is not cleared for it, it will take the path of force. If evolution is too slow, revolution, impatient and half-blind, will take its place.

FORCE is not only needlessly destructive but undemocratic. It imposes the will of some upon others in entire violation of the democratic rights of these others. Lawful methods *may* do this, force *always* does it. And the rule of force inevitably brings real control into the hands of fewer and fewer people. Force and democracy can not long exist together. Force is autocratic, violates democracy. We can not best advance democracy by violating it.

But if the avalanche is not to follow the path of violence and destruction, then the path of lawful democratic method must be cleared for it. It is not clear now.

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This country is not Russia. We have democratic governing machinery which, though imperfect, could bring about whatever changes we desired. If we could use it. But we have forgotten how to use it and have let control of it slip from our hands. Therefore we must find a means to regain control, relearn its use, set it to work and make it itself a better piece of machinery. Only *organized* effort can do this. Unless it is done *quickly*, the rising demand for changed conditions may cast aside this machinery and experiment with another kind.

THERE are three things to be done:

1. **Take actual control of public affairs into the hands of the people themselves, in accordance with the fundamental principle of democracy. This involves only lawful democratic methods.**
2. **Make the governing machinery a better means of expressing the people's wishes.**
3. **Back of the machinery, build up democracy itself.**

Democracy Itself

Until the third is done the others are of little avail. For democracy is not a piece of machinery, a form of government. That is only the tool, the expression. *Democracy is a state of mind, an attitude and practise of a people, principles and the daily application of those principles.* It can not suddenly be created by changing the machinery for its expression, either by passing laws or by using violence.

IT IS here that our entire political education and practise has wrecked itself. All our attention has been turned upon the forms, the machinery, not upon democracy itself. Upon the expression, not upon the thing to be expressed. *Democracy is in the minds of the people.* Yet we have done almost nothing to put it there, to keep, develop and strengthen it. Instead, we have stupidly considered it something planted by our forefathers that, unlike any other crop, required no attention, cultivation or feeding. *The first thing a democracy should teach is democracy.*

We have let the specialists, from college professor to street-corner orator, do our thinking for us. And specialists, being specialists, have generally lost their perspective, their sense of proportion. Valuable at the microscope, useless at the field-glass. They have given their attention to the *machinery* of democracy and government, ignoring that which creates the machinery, keeps it moving, changes it, destroys it. Their vision has not been broad enough to see that no form of government or economic system—democracy, socialism, Bolshevism or any other—can flourish or endure unless there is in the minds of the people themselves the attitude and understanding to support it and give it life. They argue over styles of architecture for our national house but give no attention to the quality of the bricks out of which any national house must be built. *The greatest architect in the world can not build a sound house out of rotten bricks. The most learned economist can not build a sound government out of bad citizens.*

The people must control, but the people must be fit to control. We must have democracy, but we can not get it merely by inventing new kinds of machinery or tinkering with the machinery we already have.

AT PRESENT we do not even know what democracy is. We have a general idea, couched in pretty phrases, but *we have no definite, practical, fundamental standard of democracy to apply as test and measure of every concrete issue, great or small.* Until we do formulate that standard and learn to apply it daily, individually, honestly and understandingly, we can have no real democracy under Socialism, Bolshevism, our present form or any other.

Democracy is a growth. The only way to hasten that growth is by education. The only kind of education equal to the task is *systematic, organized, definitely directed* education.

We must organize. We must teach, and teach the need of teaching until practical, personal democracy is made a part of every school course. We must promulgate the definition of fundamental democracy until it becomes the practical test and measure in concrete issues. We must teach, ourselves and others, in such manner that teaching and practise go hand in hand.

Democracy's Machinery

SOCIALISM, Bolshevism and our present form of government all have the same fundamental aim—real democracy, real rule by the people. They differ only as to the machinery to be employed. With a clearer understanding of the thing to be expressed by the machinery there would be less difference of opinion. That machinery is best which offers truest and *fullest* expression to democracy itself. This is the acid test of *permanent* value. A test seldom relentlessly applied.

Our present system, though, as now operative, imperfect and probably less efficient than either of the two others, is nevertheless *in its nature* a truer and fuller expression of democracy. The Socialist and Bolshevist machineries are designed to express only partial democracy. *Both Socialism and Bolshevism are fundamentally reactionary and contrary to the true advance of real democracy.* Going back to the primitive tribal point of view, they violate democracy by dividing the people into groups or classes according to occupation. *The unit of democracy is the individual.* The minute you take from the individual part of his unit rights and transfer them to a group as unit you violate the fundamentals of democracy.

FURTHER, the Socialist and Bolshevist machineries express only the economic part of man, both being definitely based on the theory that man acts and reacts only from the impulse of economic needs. Dazzled by their belated discovery of the undoubted importance of economic impulse, the specialists with their lack of proportion have tried to build upon this one factor a complete system of government. Neither Socialism or Bolshevism is, or can be, a complete governing machine, for neither offers full, direct expression to *all* of the democratic unit, individual man.

THIRD, Socialism and Bolshevism, ignoring any spiritual, mental, artistic or any other individual or social factors, build their machinery on a basis of pure materialism. The world war and its

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consequent upheavals were a struggle for democracy against autocracy, but inextricably interwoven into that struggle is the growing struggle for the spiritual against the material. Germany stood for openly declared materialism in motive, method and purpose. With the issue thus logically developed and frankly presented, the world found it could not stomach materialism. Yet with the issue only a little less baldly presented by Socialism and Bolshevism millions are rushing to the support of the materialism they can not stomach when clearly seen. Economic factors have played their mighty and materialistic part in the war and its upheavals, but underneath them have been impulses mightier than they. There is in the race of men something stronger and higher than economic impulse. Man is something better than an animal controlled by nothing but the needs of its belly and its back.

Along with the development of democracy in the minds of the race there is growing up a quickened realization of the prime importance of the spiritual. Both have withstood the test of centuries; both will go on irresistibly. If for no other reason, Socialism and Bolshevism are eventually doomed because both are retrogressive, both counter to the race development.

AND Socialism and Bolshevism are undermined by the weakness that, after limiting man to economic functions only and putting all economic functions under government control, all economic questions must be settled by vote of a majority entirely unfamiliar with economic complexities and scientific laws. In the words of an engineer, "You can not make water run up hill by popular vote."

UNLIKE Socialism and Bolshevism, our present machinery offers opportunity for complete expression of full democracy, though largely because it has not yet sufficiently developed in any direction for any part of itself to break away from the whole and attempt, as Socialism and Bolshevism have attempted, to be a complete whole in itself. Of the three it alone is sound because it alone is based solely on the real democratic unit, the individual. It alone can give complete and direct expression to all that may be in the individual.

It is fundamentally sound and therefore the only safe foundation. But in its present stage of development it is still so imperfect that millions turn from it at the first unsupported promise of a new system. It needs both repair and development. Only organized effort can do it. Only immediate action will be in time.

The Right Kind of Machinery

THE war has taught us the great lesson that present democracy is inefficient, autocracy efficient. Only by autocracizing was democracy able to save itself. Plainly power and control in a democracy, as in any other organization, must be centered into as few hands as possible if it is to be efficient. That, by itself, means autocracy. Therefore, by itself, it is not enough. It is, to a degree, what we have now. Democracy must be assured by seeing to it that the few who wield this *delegated* power are held inexorably, constantly and directly responsible and responsive to the *fundamental* power and control of the people themselves. That is what we do *not* have now.

In other words, we now lack both efficiency and democracy. We can get both.

Socialism and Bolshevism have made the attempt and failed. Our system has made no attempt other than rather aimless drifting. If it makes the attempt through changed machinery alone, as the others have done, it too will fail. If it builds up both machinery and democracy itself, coordinating them, it will succeed. Not only must the machinery provide means for fundamental control by the people themselves, but we the people must provide means of educating ourselves to the need and habit of exercising that control. Nor is that enough. Democracy itself is in the minds of the people. Except in so far as it is developed, both machinery and our control of it are valueless. The people must control, but the people must be fit to control. Only organized, directly applied education can make us so.

TO CENTRALIZE delegated power is easy. To develop active fundamental control by the people at equal pace two things are necessary.

First, machinery—some adaptation of the initiative, referendum and recall; direct elections of such delegates as senators; direct control of cabinet officers; minority representation; numerous changes in our voting methods (so that an official can no longer be elected on a minority popular vote, voters no longer deprived of votes by empty technicalities or eligible in one part of a voting area but not in another, citizens no longer deprived of voice in their public affairs on the rather humorous ground of sex); curtailment of the exaggerated power and place now held by political parties, so that party service may less undermine nation service, the people's vote no longer limited to arbitrarily selected questions presented only in block platforms, public servants no longer changed for party reasons only, public questions no longer handled and decided as party questions; new methods in handling public affairs, so that legislation can be determined more by merit and less by technicalities, manipulation and such juggling violations of majority rule as filibusters and riders.

No one of these changes can be considered by itself. Each is a necessary part of a tremendous whole and unless we get that necessary whole we face a choice between autocracy and chaos. If the total of changes is large, the alternative is larger.

Second, to hold this machinery in its place and to its purpose, there is necessary an enormous development of the civil service reform idea. The nation's business is the biggest and most important business in the country. It should have the best men, and, being a business and a highly specialized one, only specially equipped men should be chosen and means of special training, open to all, should be provided. *The nation's business is the people's business, and any sacrifice of it for personal, class or party ends is treason.* Graft is crime; inefficiency a waste of the people's blood.

Giving the People Control

THE people can get control by the simple process of taking it. By lawful methods, in exact accordance with democracy. It can be done quickly and yet by evolution, not revolution.

The chief reason why Bolshevism has been able to sweep ahead while Socialism moves slowly and our

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present system barely holds its own is that Bolshevism offers the means of putting actual control into the hands of the people *at once* through special machinery planned for that special purpose. To peoples weary of repression under monarchs, classes, parties or politicians, that one consideration is enough and blinds them to the other equally important needs of sound government. Regardless of other merits, *no system or remedy that does not offer the people immediate control of their affairs can, in this crisis, win sufficient following to establish itself in time.*

The people not only can be given control, but it *must* be given them.

There can be no valid objection to doing so. Democracy is government of, by and for the people. Only those against democracy can be against control by the people.

IT CAN be done, and done easily, because *the power is already theirs.* Our whole system of government is based on the principle that fundamental power lies in the hands of the people. It does. Whatever the people wish done will be done if they insist upon its being done. It is a primary fact. No argument can shake it.

Their power has become ineffective in this country because they have *allowed* it to. Our negligence, indifference and lack of education in democracy have allowed the control to slip from the hands of the many into the hands of the few. Nearly all our political and sociological ills are due to thus negligently allowing democracy to drift into the practise of autocracy, of control by the few. But the fundamental power is still ours. And still effective—if we exert it. What we let slip from our hands we can take back into them.

THE will of the majority *can* always have its way. Democratic government is based on the will of the people. The will of the people is expressed through public opinion. Public opinion is expressed in three ways—ballot, standing laws and direct expression.

Direct expression is given through voice, platform, print. Originally it was the only method. Later it devised ballot and laws to assist it. Gradually it left nearly all formal expressions to these devices, exercising itself only through petitions and in scattered ways. But, however much it may have delegated its functions, it still remains the fundamental method of voicing public opinion, the will of the people.

Its potential power is almost limitless. Not only is it the voice of concrete power but man is almost irresistibly swayed by the opinions of his fellows. In the past it has served as the sole executive force of governments. In some less highly developed governments it is still a recognized arm of the executive department. In our own society its tremendous force is evident in a thousand less formal ways.

To be directly and fully effective it must be *organized.* It is organized, to a limited degree, in a petition or a society. It is organized fully in the ballot and in laws. It is organized fully in the soviet system.

THAT is how Bolshevism has swept ahead, how it has been able to put control at once into the hands of the people—by *organizing public opinion.* Just as our ballot system gives direct expression an organized channel, so does the soviet voting system give it a more responsive one. Considered solely as a means of expressing public opinion, the soviet system is thoroughly democratic and thoroughly efficient in nature though not in application.

The only system that can successfully combat the spread of that system is another system of organizing public opinion that is equally democratic and equally efficient in nature, and more democratic in application.

The weakness of the soviet system as applied is that it is not based upon the real democratic unit, the individual, the human being. Another system, equally efficient, based on that unit, will outstand the soviet system. No other kind of system will. Our present system has become too inefficient and too unresponsive to public opinion.

But our present system is based upon the true democratic unit. We need only give it a new machinery more efficiently responsive to the people's will. The present machinery can remain along with the new. If later the will of the majority substitutes the new for part of the old machinery, that is merely the democratic operation of a democracy. No upheaval or revolution is involved.

The New Machinery

THE new machinery is a simple one evolved in this country years before Bolshevism was heard of. It is so democratic and so wholly within the law that it can go into operation without the need of special laws to sanction it. It is so solidly evolutionary that it can begin as an organization of private citizens, produce results as such and gradually grow to such dimensions that it becomes the whole people's method of expressing public opinion in such manner that expression becomes enforcement. It is so exactly adapted to democracy's present need that it can accomplish not one but all of the three things that need to be done:

(1) Take actual control of public affairs into the hands of the people themselves.

(2) Make the governing machinery a better means of expressing the people's wishes.

(3) Back of the machinery, build up democracy itself.

Stated in outline, this system is as follows:

CITIZENS organize themselves into Tens as working units, all over eighteen years being eligible. For voting and administrative purposes the Tens are organized into Hundreds, Thousands and higher decimal units. The individual's vote registers its exact value in the final count but the vote of a Ten is *handled* as a unit, thereby reducing the effort and expense of voting by, roughly speaking, ninety per cent. A Ten sends its vote, say seven yes, three no, to the secretary of its Hundred. The bulletin-board of the Hundred makes public that Ten's seven-three along with the votes of its other Tens and sends the Hundred's total, say eighty-twenty, to the bulletin-board of its Thousand, and so on up to city, county, State or national bulletin-board. Each Ten bulletins its own vote by individual name or, at the Ten's discretion, the accredited result of a secret ballot. Thus each step of the vote is open to the inspection of any citizen, with further publicity from the public print and official summary of the vote cast.

Not only labor and expense are cut to a minimum

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but time also. No secretary of a decimal unit has to count more than ten votes; a state secretary would count as many as there were counties in his State; the national secretary, one for each State and Territory. Votes are transmitted from unit to unit by hand, mail, telephone or telegraph, written verification following where necessary. The physical cost of a dollar or two dollars per vote under our present system is reduced to a few cents per vote under the ten system, days are reduced to hours, labor to a minimum.

A vote can be initiated by the individual members or citizens.

The result is that a popular vote can be quickly taken on any subject and at any time. *Public opinion has been organized.*

THE Ten is the working unit. In crowded communities the Tens of a Hundred can, by a majority individual vote, make the Hundred their working unit. The Ten is a democracy in itself, living and practising the democracy it preaches. Its only officer, a secretary elected by majority vote, has, outside his administrative duties in the general organization, no duties or authority except as given him by his Ten.

Throughout the organization, which is known as the American League for Citizenship, Inc., only such officers are created as are strictly necessary to the work. The League, further, teaches the idea that office-holding means only added responsibility and obligation, not superiority or self-aggrandizement. At the same time it recognizes that any democracy is dependent upon leadership, its intent is to develop leadership wherever the material can be found and its organization is particularly adopted to that purpose.

THE national body gives cohesion to the Tens, affording them the means of effective cooperation and giving direction to the work as a whole. But the active working unit is the Ten, and those serving as officers of the national or any other unit are elected and removable by majority individual vote of the members of those units.

The organization of the Ten system is so nicely adjusted that by giving each member an individual number his exact place in the national organization is plain. The number *2x547 Franklin, Ohio*, instantly identifies the citizen owning it as number seven of the fourth Ten, of the fifth Hundred, of the tenth Thousand, of the second Ten Thousand of Franklin County, Ohio. The official number of his Ten is *2x54;* of his Hundred *2x5*.

IF THE citizen members so desire, a national Council of One Hundred will be chosen by them from among those Americans of all classes who seem ablest and have shown by their living that their interest is in the people as a whole rather than in any class, party or section of them, as an advisory body, apart from administration, to give guidance in interpreting democracy in specific instances, leaving decision on those instances to majority vote of the general membership.

WITH public opinion thus organized its enforcement follows almost automatically, not merely in proportion to the numbers involved but in far greater proportion because it is in this country the *only* definitely organized public opinion of national scope. Such "popular" organizations as already exist are either openly devoted to party, class or creed, are limited to only certain phases of public affairs, or are themselves autocracies with all control in the hands of a few, using autocratic methods, breeding among the people the habit of autocracy, of letting others do their thinking for them, a menace to democratic institutions and a violation of democracy itself. While many organizations are excellent in many ways, their weakness as expressers of public opinion is recognized. Even so their voices are heard and heeded. But an organization voicing democratically organized public opinion and representative of the people as a whole will have ten times the power to enforce the people's will.

A legislative measure publicly branded by such an organization as essentially undemocratic will have trouble in finding legislative votes. A public official condemned by this expression of public opinion will find reelection difficult. When its members grow to include a majority its verdicts will be final and mandatory and its machinery able to replace our present ballot machinery.

THE work of the Tens is directed upon local as well as national affairs. It consists in preaching and practising the principles of this creed, in propaganda for further teaching and practise by others and in enforcing the democracy of this creed upon public affairs and public officials.

Of the three things the American democracy must do [(1) give the people control, (2) improve the governing machinery, (3) build up democracy itself], the Tens and their League accomplish the vital step toward the first by organizing public opinion. The third, the building up of real democracy in the minds of the people, is necessarily done *along with* the first. The safeguard of the League's work is that the first is accomplished by centering it upon the third. The second, improving the machinery, can be done only through the first, guided and determined by the third. The League's program is here additionally safeguarded by the fact that changing the machinery can not be done until the League has grown sufficiently to include the majority in its expression of public opinion, which it can do only by inculcating real democracy as it gains in numbers.

THE League teaches no new cult or -ism, but merely the fundamentals, *and the logical, insistent development* of the fundamentals, of the democracy most of us were born to and neglected; the democracy which ninety per cent. of us, from the most radical Bolshevist to the unprogressive conservative, believe in underneath our differences; the democracy that can get for the people *anything* they want, because it *is* democracy, rule by the people. This nation has not yet developed that democracy, chiefly because we have not taken the trouble to make clear to ourselves its exact meaning and are therefore stupidly striving to reach a goal we do not see. So the first work of the Tens and their League is to make clear and promulgate the exact meaning and nature of democracy.

Of the three things needing to be done, building up democracy itself in the minds of the people is the most important and the most fundamental. *No* form of democratic government can live unless its citizens themselves are sound. Whatever its architecture, a sound house can not be built out of rotten bricks. Democracy can live only in the minds of the

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people. It can not find secure lodgment there if it is only a vague idea instead of a definite working principle and guide.

ALONG with this it is necessary to emphasize the need that we do more thinking for ourselves instead of merely accepting the opinions of others. Propaganda of all kinds increases among us and propaganda is essentially one-sided and unfair. The only kind of propaganda that is fully warranted in a democracy is the kind that urges people to *think for themselves*.

A part of the League's work of stimulating independent thought is to analyze and give publicity to all present outside influences upon our thinking, their sources, motives and methods, not only the organized, propaganda of causes, but publications of all kinds, especially school-books.

Another part of this work is the dissemination of accurate and unbiased *facts* on issues, candidates and office-holders. At present such information is scantly obtainable. It is essential.

It is also a tremendous task to gather and promulgate it. Almost impossible now, the League's machinery is so organized that this and other work become comparatively easy.

The Ten system makes possible the utmost perfection in division of labor. One, fifty or hundreds of Tens can be assigned to any given candidate or question, each Ten choosing for itself whatever additional subjects it pleases. Within a Ten itself further division of labor is obtainable. (A Ten may organize with three members on condition of increasing membership where obtainable.)

EACH Ten or working unit maintains a bulletin-board accessible to the general public. Its headquarters is in a home or any other reputable place. On its bulletin-board it makes public its findings, using also the public print where available.

Each Ten gives force and reach to its bulletin-board by making itself the nucleus of a local civic center, joining with other Tens where advisable, making the public interests of the neighborhood its own, developing its neighborhood into civic consciousness. The Ten's bulletin-board, whose importance can not be too much emphasized, should carry such information as is needed by the local public—dates of primaries and elections; location of polling-place; boundaries of precincts; how and where to take out naturalization papers; a guide to helps from public services and institutions, particularly for immigrants and new citizens; a roll of honor and obligation for newly naturalized citizens, and another for the native-born who reach voting-age; notices of neighborhood entertainments and activities; data and authoritative suggestions on matters of public health, sanitation and welfare; information of permanent or temporary value along a hundred lines.

In addition to the bulletin-board, there should be at the Ten's civic center a supply of printed matter giving more detailed information whenever possible, or at least a list of such publications and the sources from which they can be obtained. Speeches, meetings, entertainments, "office hours" for personal consultation, all are possibilities as the work develops and the civic center earns its name.

As it is part of each Ten's work to organize other Tens, this local work becomes continually easier and more effective in performance.

The Meaning of Democracy

A DEMOCRACY is composed of individuals who give up to it certain rights to get back from it certain gains and who assume certain obligations to ensure to all a just balance of the giving and taking. The governing principle of democracy is that all shall act as one and that the course of that one shall be decided by the will of the greatest possible number of those who compose it. When the will of *any* minority decides, democracy no longer exists.

Citizenship is a bargain between each citizen and all citizens. Patriotism is the honest keeping of this bargain, and the loyalty of the individual belongs primarily not to a piece of map or to a government but to the whole *people* who inhabit that piece of map and create that government. *Any* allegiance to *anything* less than the people as a whole, whether to class, party, or other section, must be entirely secondary or it is a betrayal of the people as a whole, a violation of democracy.

The fate of a democracy depends upon the manner in which this citizenship bargain is kept by the individuals. Citizenship is obligation as well as privilege.

ANY government we may have is only a code of rules and a group of men, a machine created by us to manage our common interests; good or bad, it is merely the expression of our own wishes or of our failure to express our wishes; for whatever is wrong with it we ourselves are wholly responsible.

POWER, as well as responsibility, lies in our individual hands. Though we give to ourselves as a body control over ourselves as individuals, the *fundamental* power remains in us as individuals. What the individuals made they can change or remake. *No human agency can resist our power if we exert it.* But if we fail to exert our power, as we have failed in the past, democracy, to the extent of our failure, ceases to exist and power goes into the hands of the few for the benefit of the few.

Individual obligation, *individual* responsibility, *individual* power these are the essence of democratic citizenship.

THE rights and interests of the people as a whole are the first consideration of a democracy. Public office is a sacred trust, public property sacred property, the people's welfare a matter of personal honor. A crime against the state is worse than the same crime against an individual because it is a crime against *all* the individuals and against democracy itself, and must be punished with far greater severity by official penalty and by the social ostracism of the offender as a traitor to the people.

The will of the people, of their majority, must be unquestioned. Laws must be obeyed till remade, officials till replaced. The will of the people must be unimpeded. Whenever our negligence, fear or self-interest allows the few to control the many, or even to obstruct or impede the will of the many, we sin against the people and undermine democracy.

The League's Place

THE League's work is to put control of their public affairs into the hands of the American people and to make us, the people, more fit to control them. The League itself takes no sides on any concrete public issues except as they directly involve

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the life or development of democracy itself. *Its work is to assure democracy and democratic methods, leaving to the people themselves the opportunity to determine the exact machinery that seems best to them.*

Its specific stands may be outlined in general as follows:

Centralization—The League stands for all sound and legitimate measures for centralizing delegated governmental control into as few hands as possible, *but only so far as fundamental control by the people themselves is equally built up and their practise of real democracy is equally developed.*

Schools—The teaching of real democracy must be made a part of every school course. It is not enough to teach a child economics, civics and history, particularly distorted history; the school's duty is to make *him* a good citizen. To-day's children are the nation's future. No cost or effort is too great if it will ensure that future. The first thing a democracy should teach is democracy.

Immigration—Our melting-pot has not melted. Our own democracy has been too weak to democratize new material. The obvious remedy is to check or stop immigration until we have made ourselves able to democratize it. No so-called economic demand for labor can be justified if it mortgages the nation's future. If over-development of non-essential industries has depleted labor in essential fields, that is the fault of our present economic system and the only just and safe remedy is a readjustment of that system, not a further increase in the ills produced by it. A temporary and artificial need can not be met at the expense of a permanent and fundamental need.

We can, in the long run, best serve the peoples of all other nations by keeping in this country something worth their attaining rather than by ruining this something through too prodigal giving and careless adulteration.

To any admitted, citizenship in the American democracy must no longer be a cheap privilege, either through ease of attainment or through *manner* and *ceremony* of giving, and its nature and obligations must be taught to adult immigrants as systematically as to the children in our schools. Like the children, these immigrants are our future.

Class, Party, Section—As already stated, the League stands against any loyalty to anything less than the whole people in so far as it conflicts in any way with that more important loyalty, and against any minority that controls or strives to control the majority.

Graft and Pull—The present economic loss to the people through graft and pull would pay the cost of a thousand reforms. Still more serious, the weakening and rotting of real democracy is past calculation. "Graft" and "pull" are the foulest and most dangerous words in our language and the League directs every possible effort against them, particularly the "black streak" of a public official false to his trust in any way and to any degree.

The principles of the League may be stated in three sentences:

The people must control. The people must be fit to control. You can not build a good house out of bad bricks.

I BELIEVE in this creed and platform. I believe in the acute need of putting its principles into immediate operation by means of the plan it presents. The country is rapidly awakening to the need of change; even the most conservative elements are beginning to realize that the demand for change is leading us surely on to a crisis. In the face of that crisis no constructive plan of any kind has been offered except the League's plan, Bolshevism and the Socialist plan. Neither of the last two is soundly democratic, both are reactionary in fundamental principle and tendency, both are utterly dependent, when put into operation, upon the real democracy to which they fail to give sufficient attention but which is the cornerstone of the League's work.

I BELIEVE that any attempt to change our present machinery of government by violence is not only undemocratic but that, particularly in the present state and temper of the world, such an attempt will inevitably plunge us into a chaos of needless destruction. If property is wrongly held, the remedy is not destruction of that property or of human life, the two elements upon which any form of government or social organization is directly dependent for its existence and prosperity.

IN THE face of even threatened revolution our present situation courts disaster. Every faction of the people is organized and efficiently active *for its own factional interests.* The only Americans who are *not* organized and efficiently active are the *majority* of the people, those who have at heart the interests of the people as a whole, not of any one section of them, who know that democracy really developed can right any wrongs that need righting, who are the real foundation, dependence and hope of any form of government that may exist.

These, the majority, are now helpless against the organized efficiency of the various minorities. Because of the majority's lack of organization and common plan, the few dominate the many; autocracy, not democracy, is in force.

Many of this majority, lacking the cohesion of organization and the guidance and hope of a constructive, definite plan and realizing that chaos can be averted only by concerted action along definite lines, are turning more and more to the only opportunities offered—the definite programs of the minorities.

BECAUSE the League's creed and program seem to me sound and right and because it is the only soundly constructive program offered in the national emergency, I not only hereby pledge my support of its principles but engage actively to further its work by every legitimate means so long as it adheres to the principles herein set forth. To this I take my solemn oath (or affirmation).

Signed.....

CALL your local public meeting for Wednesday, June twenty-fifth. See that all classes and parties are reached. Have one or several speakers who believe in the work and are thoroughly familiar with the subject. Center the meeting upon getting definite pledges, at the meeting, from citizens to organize Tens at once. Get every citizen possible to swear or affirm his allegiance to the League's New Creed for Americans, making that giving of allegiance a definite, earnest, sincere ceremony. If possible, have printed copies of the Creed for signing and further distribution.

Get publicity for both the Creed and the meeting

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in the press, through posters or bulletins, the pulpit, at public entertainments, by personal presentation. Organize an energetic publicity committee. Get the support of influential citizens and of local organizations. Keep the whole work entirely free from even the suspicion of party or class affiliation or atmosphere.

Organize an efficient temporary committee for grouping Tens into Hundreds and higher units, holding each unit as close as possible to one neighborhood or voting precinct. Once formed, the units will elect their own secretaries and committees.

If you live in too large a town to be covered by one meeting, appoint sub-committees for other meetings. If a near-by town or country district is not organizing, interest some one there in doing so. If you know citizens in distant places who are already thinking along these lines, write them in time for them to act on June twenty-fifth.

HAVE the Tens and other units begin work locally. More general work will begin as soon as the Tens have spread sufficiently, but begin planning for the county and State units.

Centralize the work for the time being by reporting either to the League's present directors at 50 West Twelfth Street, New York City, or to me in care of this magazine. The League has been incorporated by some of my personal friends and myself as a holding organization. Allegiance to the League is in all cases given on the definite understanding that it is binding only if control of the League is taken out of our hands and put democratically into the hands of the membership at large.

This magazine is printing no extra copies for sale. The very few copies it has of the Creed printed by itself will be distributed without charge. The magazine is merely doing its part as a good American; in no other way does it enter into this work.

SEND no money to the League's headquarters and collect none locally except for the purpose of local publicity. But before anything else is done, write to national headquarters stating your allegiance to the Creed, what definite organizing work you are undertaking, and just how much money you will contribute to the general cause when the League and its work develop as you expect them to develop. Send also the names of good organizers in other towns and districts.

As soon as your plans for the June twenty-fifth meeting have taken definite shape, send in *at once* a brief report in addition to your initial letter. With reports of definite progress put in the hands of the central committee we can get the movement an amount of national publicity that will advance its spread tremendously. Be sure that these reports reach us in plenty of time for us to act and get results before June twenty-fifth.

This is a democratic organization. The control will lie with the people themselves and *the work must be done by the people themselves*. It must grow from the foundations, not from the top. *You* are one of those upon whom it is dependent. It may be that *you* and the question of whether you work or not may be the turning-point in a crisis.

This work can be done.

THERE is no more to say. Few can be too blind to see the approach of a crisis. This is being written in March. Perhaps the crisis will raise its head by the time this reaches you in print. Perhaps a month later, or a year. No one knows. In any case, there is small time to prepare for it.

No appeal is made to your emotions. This is not a matter to be weighed and decided by emotions. The appeal is to your brains. And to your innate sense of justice and obligation. Our emotions are a factor, but let us map our course by sense and right, leaving our emotions to enforce our decisions. No one of us has a right to decide his course toward the American people according to the effects of oratory or invective, flowery appeals or witty abuse, unctuous soothing or unreasoning bitterness. We must think.

What I have to give I have given you. It is the work of some eleven years, almost single handed. For eleven years I have watched public attitude toward the ideas and principles here set forth. At first there was no interest. Gradually people's thought has been forced by the course of events more and more toward these lines until they have come to be the natural expression of an ever-growing number of Americans. Again and again I have torn up parts of a book because ideas that needed much argument to make them even heeded at the time they were written had come to be popularly accepted as almost matters of course. The war and our entry into it quickened public thought a hundredfold. What seemed useless theory ten years ago has become a practical issue. What would have been impossible of accomplishment five years ago is now greeted by both need and demand for its accomplishment.

The rest lies with you. It has been objected that such a movement should be "safeguarded from falling into wrong hands." It is wholly designed to fall into the people's hands. If these are wrong hands, then democracy is wrong. Any other kind of safeguard would be autocratic. We have already demonstrated in this country that democracy "safeguarded" by autocracy is not a success. Or democracy.

And it is the essence of this movement that it develops our fitness as it develops our power.

THE rest lies with you. Both duty and self-interest demand that you act and act quickly. We Americans have inherited ideals that are valuable not only to ourselves but to the world at large. We have tarnished those ideals by neglect and by violation. It must be our work to undo the harm we have done and to atone for it by advancing the work we have let slip backward.

Some day the world will throw down international barriers but we can not be either competent or fit for that world-wide brotherhood until we have made ourselves competent and fit for the smaller brotherhood of a nation.

It lies with you.

ARTHUR S. HOFFMAN.

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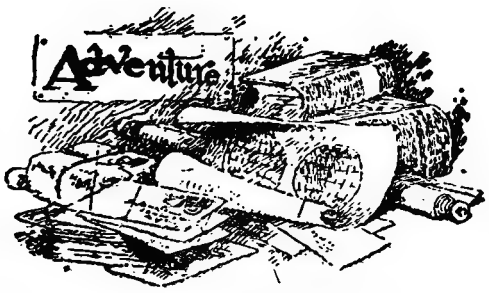

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *postpaid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL SELL: First April, 1918, to date. 15 cents each, post paid.—LOUIS GODLEWSKI, 2915 Gresham Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

WILL BUY: Issues of ADVENTURE for 1910, 1911, 1912 and 1913. Please let me know what you have with price for same. Must be in good condition and with covers on. All letters answered.—WALTER E. GOODWIN, P. O. Clerk, Dover, New Hampshire.

WILL BUY: Jan., 1913; Jan., 1916; Aug., 1916; First Aug., 1918; First Oct., 1918, 25 cents each—S. B. H. HURST, Box 892, Seattle, Wash.

WILL BUY: November and December, 1910. Must be in fair condition: no pages missing. Will pay 25 cents each —GEORGE N. HEFLICK, P. O. Box 38, Mantoa, Ohio.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 Thirty-third Ave., N.E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, P. O. Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

10. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. Ry. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec

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and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
Ed. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

17. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

18. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

19. South America Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

20. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

21. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

22. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

23. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

24. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

25. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

26. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

27. Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

28. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

29. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 424 Black Bldg., Los Angeles, Cal. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shot-guns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shot-Guns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

Trapping in Wisconsin and Minnesota

OUR own country has many places where trapping may be carried on profitably. Nor need one go far from the beaten path.

Question:—"I am a resident of Wisconsin on the Mississippi River, near La Crosse. I have been doing trapping and fishing for the last three years.

I would like to trap at the head of the St. Croix River, or in some good country in Minnesota.

I would rather prefer a swampy country, or where it is well watered, with plenty of muskrats. If you know of such a place, I wish you would let me know about it, as I am sort of tired of the old haunts.

On the other hand, I would like to know of some good lakes, rather small ones, to seine in. I am writing to the State Conservation Commission. But, if you knew of a particularly prospective lake, I wish you would let me know. Also, where can I get the best maps of both States?"—FRANK MARSHALL, Leonard, North Dakota.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—I don't think you will have any trouble finding what you want in the

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trapping-line around the head of St. Croix River. It's full of ponds, lakes, and little streams up that way, being part of the old glacial plain, and if you go up there and prospect around you will get to hear about what you want.

Probably you will be able to take up your line in the kind of country you would rather have. Take it in Burnett county, for example, or just over the line to the north, in Minnesota. You'll be a long way back, in those woods, and probably won't find many around there except once in a while another trapper, and probably scattered settlers around.

You might write to the Postmaster, Grantsburg, Wisconsin, and Postmaster, Bruno, Minnesota, and ask about roads into the Yellow River country. Yellow Lake, Fairview, Kruger, Kertel, are other towns up that way, and, if you talk to some fur buyers in St. Paul and Minneapolis, you might get a straight tip for good country, as they are right there. Triumph Trap Co., Oneida, N. Y., have correspondents up that way, too, and Manager Adams has had a man out there selling traps who might be able to give you tips. Better open up some of the clam-shells up that way for luck.

"Paradise of the Pacific"

THE Stars and Stripes float over this paradise. It is named "Hawaii." "Land of Fruit and Flowers, Sunshine and Music" would have been more truly descriptive:

Question:—"Please give me information regarding the Hawaiian Islands.

How is the climate? Can one wear 'palm beaches' all the year round? If not, what clothes would be needed in the Winter? Do they have a rainy season in the Winter? How long does it last? Is the climate healthy? Is there much leprosy on the islands?

What do you know about Molokai? Is there any big game there? What kind of poisonous insects and reptiles are there? Are the mosquitoes very bad? How are the natives looked upon by the white people? You understand what I mean—do they mix in society?

Do many of the natives still live in grass houses, and do the girls wear 'shredded wheat dresses'? I have heard that the natives will not let the tourists see the real Hula dance and that it is very different from what we see on the American stage. Is that so?

Did the natives, years ago, ever sacrifice human beings to the gods of the volcanoes? That's what I saw in a play called 'The Bird of Paradise.'

Tell me something of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa. Are there any active volcanoes on the islands, and about how often do they overflow?

Tell me something of the trees, flowers and fruits of the islands and of the customs and dress of the natives. Do you know anything of a place called Waialae? Tell me something of Honolulu, Hilo and Waikiki beach. What is Telegraph Hill—a town or a wireless station? Are the man-eating sharks very bad in the waters around the islands? What is meant by the tropics 'getting' a fellow? What language is spoken mostly there?

Do you know of any books that would help a fellow to pronounce those 'tongue-twisting' Hawaiian names? Where can I get a *big* map of the islands? I have heard that the islands were owned by about a dozen millionaires and that a little man from the outside hardly had a chance to even make a living. Is there any truth to that, or is the fellow that said so just a pessimist? Is there any government land where a man can roam around and pitch his camp where he pleases? What is the name of that 'highly intoxicating' drink that the natives make, and what is it made of?

What are the principal industries of the islands? What chance has a stranger got of getting a job? Are the salaries about the same as anywhere else? Is living cheap or high compared with America?

About what is the fare from Frisco to Honolulu? Are the Hawaiian Islands a land of fruit and flowers, of sunshine and music, the 'Paradise of the Pacific,' where it is Summer all the year round and everybody is happy, etc., etc., or is all that stuff we read in novels just some fellow's pipe dream?

Suppose two young men, both 21 years old, single, both healthy and strong, had about $250 or $300 each, felt restless, and they wanted to see the South Sea Islands very much. Do you think they could 'get by' on that amount of money and a moderate amount of work thrown in, mixed with a good portion of determination and grit."—W. B. W., Shreveport, La.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—I am sending you under separate cover copies of literature descriptive of the Islands.

I am going to answer your letter seriatim. The climate of Hawaii is probably the most equable in the world. The temperature in January, for the last 29 years is 71°, the maximum being 84° and the minimum 54°; with a normal mean rainfall for that month of 3.25 inches; and for the month of July for the last 29 years, the normal is 77°, the absolute maximum being 88° and the absolute minimum 63°. The normal rainfall for the month of July is 1.48 inches.

You will thus see that although we have more rain in the Winter than in the Summer, we have no excessive rainy season. Palm beach suits can be worn all the year around. The prevailing wind is northeast and it is these gentle trades, which have velocity of about 8 miles per hour, which conduce to one's comfort.

There is very little leprosy on the islands. Leprosy was introduced from China many years ago and all such cases have been kept on the island of Molokai, at the settlement known as Kalapapa.

We have little big game here, although one of the islands is stocked with deer. There are no poisonous plants or reptiles. There are a few mosquitoes, but they scarcely become even an annoyance.

The native Hawaiians are a very fine race of people and have descended from Polynesians, and some of our best Hawaiians are leaders of society. You will note from the lists of nationalities shown that the native Hawaiian forms a very small section of the population, and, while one can still see the greatest number of Hawaiians in the out-of-the-way places, it is not common to see girls with "shredded wheat" dresses, except those professional Hula dancers. The Hula dance as seen on the American stage is nothing more than a suggestion of licentiousness and is usually much more vulgar than anything you could see here. As a matter of fact, the Hula was originally a religious dance, intended to portray various moods.

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Human sacrifices were made in the olden days and the stories woven around the mythology of the Goddess Pele are very interesting. Madam Pele was the Goddess of fire and native superstition has it that she makes her home in the volcano at Kilauea, an active volcano on the island of Hawaii. The volcano Kilauea is very active at the present time and is expected to overflow some time next February. However, this is not a source of menace, as most of the people here rush at once to the volcano when there is any evidence of an imminent overflow. The mountains Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa are each 14,000 feet high, and there is another active volcano on the top of Mauna Loa which is Mokuaweoweo. However, this is only intermittently active.

Waialae is a district of Honolulu 6 or 7 miles from the city. There is no town there at all. Honolulu is a city of 75,000 inhabitants and is much the same as any American city. This also applies to Hilo, except that Hilo is a city of 10,000 people. Waikiki is a district of the city of Honolulu where are located some of the finest hotels. Hence it became famous as a swimming resort.

You ask what is Telegraph Hill, a town or a wireless station? I presume you refer to Telegraph Hill of San Francisco, as there is no such place of that name here.

There are sharks in the water around the island of Hawaii, but a reef surrounds the island over which it is very rare to find a shark, so that swimming is perfectly safe at all times.

The phrase of the tropics "getting a fellow" does not apply to Hawaii, as it can scarcely be called in the tropics. In very hot climates one is inclined to become indolent, but with our invigorating breezes there is no danger of that here. The English language is spoken here altogether. The little booklet sent you called a Primer, page 10, will give you an idea of how to pronounce all Hawaiian names. They are really very simple, as every syllable ends in a vowel and has the Spanish pronunciation.

I am sending you under separate cover a large map of the islands. What you have heard of several men owning the islands and that the little man has little chance of earning a living is true, in that all the large sugar and pineapple industries are controlled by 4 or 5 firms and that all of the other lines of industry more than cater to the needs of the population. At the same time, if a man makes a better article than his neighbor he will be in demand as much as Emerson's mouse-trap maker who made such a fine mouse-trap that, although located in the heart of a forest, people made a beaten track to his door. As to camping facilities, you can always get this anywhere in the islands by courtesy of the landowners.

The Hawaiian Islands are in the "dry" column, but the natives have made a liquor called Okolehao, which is over 90 per cent. alcohol and calculated to make any one drinking it tackle a regiment of German shock troops alone.

As stated before, the principal business of the islands is raising sugar and pineapples. Living is much the same here as on the mainland and I will again refer you to the little booklet called the Primer on page 31. The per cent. of increase that you have experienced on the mainland due to the war should be added to the prices shown therein. The steamer fare from San Francisco to Honolulu is $75 and up.

Certainly the Hawaiian Islands, which are sometimes called the "Paradise of the Pacific," are islands of fruit and flowers, sunshine and music. And certainly, climatological conditions being what they are, there is reason that every one should be happy.

I think that two young men with about $300 each could make a trip here and see a great deal of the islands even without working and have an enjoyable time.

The Great American Desert

THERE appears to be no such animal. Which knocks another fond idea into a million bits. But there are several man-sized deserts west of Kansas, for all of that. One is the Mojave, concerning which Mr. Harriman tells several secrets:

Question:—"I would like to obtain information of the great American desert. I understand it is uninhabited, no water, and that there is a fortune for a man if he can manage to live in it and explore dried-up stream-beds for gold.

Please let me know where I can obtain maps and literature on the desert."—R. H. BOULTON, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—The Great American Desert, as taught in the old schoolbooks, does not exist. That term was once applied to the great plains district that is now covered with farms and towns.

You probably allude to the Mojave desert, which is a desert beyond all controversy. The Mojave desert has been prospected by thousands of experienced miners and has hundreds of active mines. There are a number of little towns scattered over it, where they have been able to develop water by boring.

There are extensive parts where there is no water and it is very dangerous to explore without a guide who is an experienced man.

Hunting for gold there is a gamble with the cards stacked against you. Where one man strikes it rich there are hundreds who make a bare living. I have corresponded with one who has prospected there for years and has found nothing worth more than a month or two of effort. He has existed, but no more.

There is more money in locating other minerals than gold. Gold has been the main object of thousands and the whole western section has been combed for it for seventy years. I would never advise any man to go hunting gold on the desert. It kills too many men.

Most of the desert is unmapped, though you can get certain maps of desert country from Cunningham, Curtis and Welch, 3rd and Spring, Los Angeles, Calif. They cost about 30c apiece.

East Africa—Sportsman's Paradise

WHETHER you choose to shoot with gun or camera, British East Africa offers a remarkable variety of game; and in such numbers that grazing herds of wild

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beasts may be seen from the windows of railroad trains:

Question:—"I am contemplating a trip to Africa. My object is hunting, with both gun and camera.

What particular part of the country would you advise going to to strike the best hunting grounds for lion and elephants? What is the attitude of the natives of the locality that you recommend? Do they ever hunt the lion with their native weapons, and what is the usual outcome of such hunts?

I intend to travel as light as is consistent with the object of my expedition, there being myself and one other from this country, and I intend to stay from three months to a year, depending upon the length of time that it takes me to accumulate the photographs that I want. You see, I'm more interested in photography than I am in shooting. Now, what do you think would be the approximate cost of a trip of this kind, we'll say, for six months? Would it be advisable to outfit here in the States or over there? What is the procedure of getting the necessary permission to go on an expedition of this kind? What time of year would you advise going?

Any other information that you can give me will be appreciated very much."—C. H.

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—1. British East Africa from Mombassa; around Tsavo country for lion and the Eldama Ravine for elephant.

2. Natives now friendly and willing to help; quite safe.

3. Yes; with their short stabbing spears and throwing sword. They seldom attack a lion single-handed, although it is the thing for a warrior to do; and they usually get him. Such attacks are invariably made to protect their herds or villages.

4. The approximate cost is a poser! So much depends upon how you intend to do it. B. E. A. is the sporting (big game) country of the sportsman de luxe. But you can do it very reasonably, indeed, if you do not permit local agents to run you into the de luxe plane. Say, for running expenses, including two of you, and necessary servants and carriers, about $50 per month. Carriers run at about $1.20 per month, and feed themselves: servants $2.00 $5.00, although the latter for English-speaking natives or more. Necessary equipment, tent, rifles, etc., about $500, which of course you can sell afterward.

5. By no means outfit here. You can find everything you can want there at Mombassa or Nairobi; and very much cheaper—clothes as well.

6. You will require a big game license, which costs $250 and permits two *bull* elephants and various "twos" of other male game. Can be obtained at Mombassa.

7. About March. It is right on the equator, so there is no Summer or Winter; two rainy seasons, one short, the other longer. The country rises steadily from the coast to over 6,000 feet, so you may practically choose your climate from tropic heat to sunny days and white frost at night. The rail trip is one of the most beautiful and astonishing. Game is so plentiful that, from the train, parts of the country resemble a sheep or a cattle ranch. No exaggeration! It is undoubtedly the garden of Africa—what California is to America.

Australia, Land of Sunshine

TOWERING mountains; glistening beaches; farms on whose broad acres grow the wool and wheat sold round the world; people who work and play in equal proportion; Australia will give you these—and more:

Question:—"As I am going to ship for Australia in a few weeks, I would like to know about the customs and travel, especially around Sydney."—H. F. J. BARROW, Bremerton, Washington.

Answer, by Mr. Goldie:—It is rather difficult for me to know by your letter just what information you want; but, if it is in regard to the character of Sydney and its surrounding attractions, I will do the best I can for you in the course of this letter.

Sydney, which is now a prosperous modern city of about 800,000 people, has no equal in the world in point of picturesqueness; and, as a world traveler, I venture the assertion that there are more beauty-spots in and close to this city than can be found in any other three cities of the world. That sounds like a home-towner's boast, no doubt, but it is my honest opinion, based upon much experience of big world cities.

When you enter Sydney harbor you will begin to realize the Eden-like quality of its beauty, and you will doubtless be delighted by the succession of beautiful bays and coves that you will pass, each with its glittering, white beach, leading down to which are gorgeous flower gardens fronting pretty and artistic bungalows or pretentious mansion homes.

One of the first things you will inevitably do in Sydney is to visit Manly, Coogee, Bondi and other seaside resorts, all of which are close to the city and to which all Sydney flocks both morning and evening to enjoy the surf bathing, which is the national sport and pastime. Nowhere in the world is there such surf bathing; nowhere can be found such vast crowds of light-hearted people going day by day to plunge in the breakers and to ride the great rolling waves that crash upon the many fine beaches—real, sandy beaches—which surround the city.

You must not miss the ferry trips up the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers—two magnificent streams of water which flow from the harbor and in whose gracefully curving reaches, upon which are set a seemingly endless succession of bewilderingly beautiful garden homes, you will enjoy a perfect scene-fest.

Then you must go on a motor-launch around Middle Harbor and see more bays—more charming little coves—more splendid homes. And, if you wish more water scenery, you may revel in the delights of Pittwater, which is still another harbor, or take a trip by trolley to Botany Bay, where Captain Cook landed, or another car ride to La Perouse, where the aborigines make their home, or go by train to Como and take a boat along the Georges River or— But need I go on? There are another score or more of beautiful water resorts to be mentioned, each having its own distinctive beauty.

When you have seen Sydney and its environs

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you should take train to Katoomba in the Blue Mountains, only two and a half hours from the city, where you will find yourself in the midst of scenery of quite a different character—noble mountains, immense cañons, enchanting gullies full of ferns and wild flowers, all covered in a blue haze which adds to the beauty of the scenes.

Having enjoyed the attractions of coast and harbors and rivers and mountains you may next see something of the pastoral beauty of the state by taking train and traveling for a few hours to any of the many small towns near Sydney, which will give you an idea of the great wealth of this state and will make you realize how Australia has become famous for her wool and wheat. The railways which are owned by the government go everywhere and traveling is comfortable and cheap.

You will not be long in Sydney before you will realize that the principal custom of the country is to take life easy, to enjoy all kinds of open-air sports and pastimes, and to bask in sunshine only equaled in southern California or southern Italy.

To Work in South America

HERE'S an old question that apparently is ever new: What are the chances for a young man in South America? Captain Dingle gives some common sense advice:

Question:—"I am writing to ask what the chances are for a fellow of twenty-one years on the South American Coast, from Valparaiso south. Have a high school education and would like to try my luck in South America, either sailing along the coast or working in a shipping port."—GEO. W. NEWCOMB, Kentville, N. S.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—Unless you learn sufficient Spanish to enable you to mix with competitors on equal terms, there is little you can hope to accomplish in Latin American countries, outside of plain laborer's or roustabout's work.

In Chile, the nitrate business offers plenty of employment, but except to handle a shovel you must speak the language and have a business idea. There are here, and in Peru also, a lot of industries where men from the North are welcome if they are a little above the laborer class; and in almost all the ports a man may scratch some sort of a living by much the same methods as he would apply in shipping ports here or in Canada.

If you are agriculturally inclined, Chile or Peru offers great farming openings—wheat, oats, hay, cotton, wool, etc., constituting a great portion of the country's trades.

Since, however, all industries have suffered, or at least undergone change, through the war, conditions may never in the near future return to normal; and for this reason I should hesitate to advise you to go down there unless you prepared yourself by a business course or some special training in modern trades for a position better than common. You will almost certainly secure better, up-to-date, authoritative information, applying to present conditions, by applying to Mr. Francisco J. Yanes, Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C., who will gladly indicate any possible outlet for such abilities as you tell him you have. Simply to say you have a high school education means very little. There are high school graduates who have little more to learn; there are others who might as well have spent their time fishing.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

COATES, FRANK. Last heard from in San Jauncito, Honduras, June, 1917. Please communicate with L. T. 372, care of *Adventure.*

WILLIAMS, H. M. Electrician on board U. S. S. *Brooklyn*, 1915 to 1918. Hank, write to your pal, "Moose."—Address WILLIAM DE LA MOOS, 121 Washington St., Hoboken, N. J.

EATON, HERBERT P. Railroad brakeman, formerly on Boston & Albany and Maine Central roads. Letters addressed to Bangor returned. Write; important.—Address A. WESCOTT, Castine, Maine.

LEE, DELBERT C. Flower Hospital, New York. To my pal: Would like to hear from you.—Address E. E. HAACK, Vancouver, Washington.

CURRAN, HUGH. Last heard of in Canada in 1914. Believed to have enlisted in Canadian army. Will be grateful for any information.—Address HARRY CURRAN, Hotel Mekissick, Reno, Nevada.

U. S. NAVAL AVIATION REPAIR BASE, Eastleigh, England, Hants. Would like to hear from any of the boys there.—Address JAMES J. BURKE, Chief Yeoman, U. S. S. *Chicago*, care of Postmaster, New York, N. Y.

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SMITH, FORMAN. Last heard of working in tie camp along the Grand Trunk Railroad. Last letter received from him marked Prince George, B. C. on way to Vancouver. Worked last at Hanson tie camp, Sherton, B. C. Any one knowing address please write.—Address E. W. D. 87 Hall St., Waltham, Mass.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

MARTIN, ABRAHAM. Age thirty-five, height about five feet seven inches. Dark hair and complexion. Native of North of Ireland. Last known address, Ray, Minnesota, in 1911 or 1912. Will be grateful for any information.—Address ALEX STEELE, 421 Dufferin Ave., London, Ont., Canada.

JENKS, FRANK E. Last known at 3335 Wilson Ave., Oakland, California. Height five feet two inches; weight about 140 pounds; occupation, printer. Last heard of in July, 1917. Will be grateful for any information.—Address F. L. TAYLOR, 59 South River St., Aurora, Illinois.

COLES, HILDEGARDE R.; JENKS, ALTHEA; JENKS, NELLIE: My daughters. Last heard of twenty-two years ago, Hildegarde in East Hartford, Althea and Nellie in Bridgeport, Conn. Their father would be very grateful for any information concerning them.—Address ELMORE F. JENKS, R. F. D. Haddam, Connecticut.

GROSS, MARLEA. Cousin. Last heard of living at the Hotel Endicott, New York, practising for the chorus of the "Passing Show of 1918." She is a native of Binghamton, N. Y. and was living there in 1917. Was at a football game played there on Thanksgiving Day. She may be married by now. Any information will be appreciated.—Address O. A., Room 4204, Bancroft Hall, Annapolis, Maryland.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

ROSS, JOHN K. Who disappeared from Johnstown, March 18, 1905, and never heard from since. He will be thirty years old March twenty-third. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his mother and sisters. Please write sister.—MRS. BERTHA ZIMMERMAN, 306 Strayer St., Dale, Johnstown, Pa.

MARSHALL, BERT W. Sometimes calls himself FRED MARTIN or FRED BICKNELL. Last heard from him November, 1916. He was then at McVille, North Dakota, working in a blacksmith shop. He is five feet eleven inches in height, and weighs about 165 pounds. Blue eyes, brown hair and small scar on bridge of nose. Any information will be gratefully received by his daughter.—Address LILLIAN MARSHALL, 135 N. Root St., Aurora. Illinois.

WRIGHT, LEM K. Believed to be working somewhere in Maiden Lane. Lived formerly in the Bronx, New York City.—Address R. T. RUIZ, United Shoe Machinery Co., de Cuba, Calzada del Carro, 719, Habana, Cuba.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

KEEFFER or KEIFFER. Served with me aboard the U. S. S. *North Carolina*, when a bunch of us Marines were sent to Turkey in 1909. If any of my old shipmates see this, write me.—Address ROBERT F. AULT, Gaylesville, Ala., Route 2.

BIRD, RHODORA. Last seen in New York City, May, 1918; age thirty; five feet ten inches; weighs about 140 pounds. Write to me. Something framed for next Summer.—Address REDDY BIRD, JR., 46 Mt. Vernon St., Boston, Massachusetts.

MEGGISON, JOHN B. Last seen in Minneapolis, Minn., April, 1911. Height about five feet eight inches. Blue eyes, curly hair, blond. Weighs about 150 pounds, was traveling salesman. His address was then 14 Southeast Prince St. Will be grateful for any information.—Address F. L. TAYLOR, 50 South River St., Aurora, Ill.

JOHNSON, SAM H. Father lived in Cairo, Ill. Went to California to meet John C. Frémont about 1869. At one time lived in Burlington, Ohio. Person by this name said to have been killed in railroad wreck forty years ago, for whose heirs attorneys in Kansas City have been searching. His father was a Methodist minister and he had three brothers and two sisters—one brother William A. and one sister Annie. Will be very grateful for any information at all about this.—Address L. T. 373 care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First June or Mid-June issues of Adventure. They can get the names of the inquirers from this magazine:

ALVAREZ, M. H.; Beaton, Sergeant Major Gordon M.; Beyrsdoffer, A.; Bjerkander, Henry, or Benson; Boyle, J. Gordon; Burdick, E. C.; Bullard, Dexter; Butler, Jack Ormonde; Caleb, Susanna; Coate, Tom; Coe, C. A.; Delamitir, I. H.; Dickey, Hubert; Dickinson, M. D.; Ducette, Hector; Earle, William F.; Egan, D. Jack; Gallaway, Karl H.; Gates, Walter C.; Hook, Mrs. Mary; Hunt, Charles; Kelly Thomas, Francis; Lindrot, Alexander; Moody, Earl W.; Nein, Wm.; Noras, John; Rosinoff, Samuel; Shepherd, Guy M.; Tebow, Ralph E.; Thomas, James; Tompkins, Robt. A.; Ward, Jos. M.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Lee Hays; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Cole Williams; Bryon Chrisholm.

Please send us your present address. Mail forwarded to address given us does not reach you.—Address J. E. Cox, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MID-JULY ADVENTURE

Ten stories of the fortunes of men in near lands and far are between the covers of the Mid-July number. Three you will find mentioned on the second page of this issue. Here are the others:

THE RAWHIDERS — *By Barry Scobee*
What the Army did for one man.

LOCAL OPTION IN LOCO LAND — *By W. C. Tuttle*
In which the punchers of Piperock struggle valiantly with a low attempt to infringe their personal liberty.

PEEP-EYE — *By Hapsburg Liebe*
Which begins when the terror of the Pigeon River logging country starts out to drown his sorrow.

ON THE TRAIL OF TIPPOO TIB. A Six-Part Story. Conclusion. — *By Talbot Mundy*
On the last lap of their search for Africa's treasure, *Yerkes* and his comrades find no diminishing in the dangers that beset their trail.

DUCK SING, HIM KETCH 'UM! — *By William M. McCoy*
The story of *Useless*, *Little Red* and the Chinese cook.

***GAUNTLET'S* LOG** — *By Capt. A. E. Dingle*
The true story of an amazing voyage.

THE RED SHEPHERDESS — *By Agnes and Egerton Castle*
Full of plots and intrigues was France when Napoleon was coming into power.

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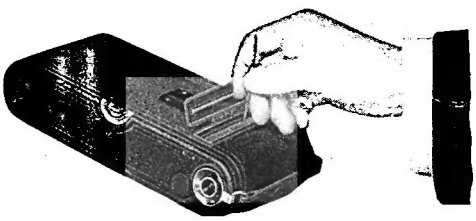

The date on the Film

In just a few years you will ask:

This picture of John, was it made before or after the war? And this of little Mary taking her first toddling steps—how old was she then?

How those snap-shots, made on our trip to the Yellowstone bring it all back to us, except the date,—when *did* we go?

Grandmother before the fireplace with her knitting, growing old gently and gracefully—how old was she? It is so annoying not to remember.

Time plays the mischief with memory—but with the *date on the film* you may laugh at his tricks. All folding Kodaks and folding Brownies are now *autographic* and, with autographic film, provide the means for dating and titling each negative as you make it. It is all done in a few seconds, is as simple as "pressing the button" and though it may not seem so at the moment, *a date is always worth while.*

And there is no extra charge for autographic film.

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Rochester, N. Y., *The Kodak City*

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